

Daddy Takes Us HUNTING BIRDS



Howard R. Garis

RICHARD DREW MUSSER.



SARAH WALKER MUSSER.

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Daddy Takes Us Hunting Birds

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HOWARD R. GARIS

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DADDY TAKES US HUNTING BIRDS

Daddy Takes us Hunting Birds

CHAPTER I

THE LOST BIRD

"MOTHER, may I give Dickie his bath?" asked little Mabel Blake, as she stood looking up at the cage in which her yellow canary was singing so sweetly.

"Yes, Mab, I think so. Be careful not to spill the water."

"I'll be careful," Mab promised. "You please lift down the cage for me, Mother, and unhook the bottom. Then I'll set the top part over Dickie's bath-tub, and watch him splash in it."

While Mrs. Blake was lifting the big cage off the hook where it hung in the bow window of the sitting-room, Mab filled the clean white dish with water.

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As she came out of the bathroom with it, a curly little poodle dog ran up-stairs, barking and yelping. Straight for Mab's feet rushed the little dog.

"Oh, Roly-Poly! Look out!" cried Mab. "You'll make me spill Dickie's bath water! Oh, Roly-Poly! Don't!"

And, just as Mab said this Roly-Poly darted right between her feet, and she dropped the dish. The water splashed all over the floor, but as the dish fell on the soft carpet it was not broken.

"Oh, Roly-Poly! Look what you made me do!" cried Mab, sorrowfully.

"Bow-wow! Wow!" barked the little poodle dog, and this, I suppose, was his way of saying:

"Oh, I beg your pardon! Please excuse me! I didn't mean to do it."

The water had splashed all over Roly-Poly, and he shook his shaggy coat of hair to shake off the water drops.

"Oh dear! Now that's worse than ever!" cried Mab. "You'll splatter water all over the wall paper! You're

worse than my canary bird, Dickie! I don't see what made you run up the stairs, and at me, so fast for, Roly," went on Mab, as she picked up the dish and went in the bathroom to get more water from the wash basin.

Just then, at the foot of the stairs, Mab saw her brother Hal. Hal began running up the steps, calling to his sister:

"Did you see Roly-Poly? Is he up there? I want him!"

"Were you chasing him?" asked Mab. "If you were you made him make me spill Dickie's bath water."

"How did I?" asked Hal. "Anyhow I wasn't chasing Roly. I saw him run in the house, and I just thought he came upstairs, so I came after him."

"He did come up here," said Mab. "He's all wet, and he's drying himself off by rolling over and over on a towel. Stop it, Roly!" she cried, "or mother won't like it. What made him run, Hal, if you didn't chase him?"

"It was a cat, Mab."

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“A cat?”

“Yes, the big black one that lives in Mrs. Jackson’s house. This cat was sitting on the front steps, washing its face with its paws, and, all of a sudden, Roly, who was playing out in the street, ran up to the cat and barked.”

“And what did the cat do?” Mab wanted to know.

“He just sissed like a firecracker when it doesn’t shoot, and then the cat stretched out its paw and scratched Roly-Poly on the nose. He howled like anything and ran, our dog did. I was playing across the street and I saw him.”

“Poor Roly-Poly!” said Mab kindly, as she patted the little poodle dog. “Did the bad cat scratch your nose very hard?”

Mab tried to feel the dog’s nose, as Daddy Blake sometimes did to tell whether or not Roly was ill. For when a dog’s or a cat’s nose is hot and dry they are not well. Their noses must be cool, and moist.

“Bow-wow!” barked Roly as little

Mab felt of his nose. "Bow-wow!" That was his way of saying that the place where the cat had scratched him did hurt, and he would rather Mab did not touch it.

"Poor Roly-Poly," said Mab. "I'll forgive you for knocking the bath dish out of my hand, because you did it when you were scared."

"I'll go ask Aunt Lolly for a rag and some salve to put on Roly's nose," said Hal.

"What did the cat do after she scratched our dog?" Mab wanted to know.

"Oh, she made her tail as big as a bologna sausage, and ran away, too," Hal said, as he went to look for his aunt. Her name was not really "Lolly," but Hal and Mab called her that because she used to give them a lollypop now and then.

Sometimes they called her Aunt Lollypop, but generally they only had time to say half the name.

Aunt Lolly lived with Hal and Mab Blake, and also, of course, with Daddy

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and Mother Blake. So did Uncle Pennywait. That was not his real name, either, but the children called him that because he so often said:

“Wait a minute and I’ll give you a penny.”

And he did, too, so he got the name “Pennywait.”

Hal and Mab lived in a nice country place near the woods, and they liked nothing better than when Daddy took them walking under the trees.

While Hal went to look for Aunt Lolly, to ask her to get him the rag and salve for Roly-Poly’s scratched nose, Mab carried the water for her canary bird’s bath to the table in the up-stairs sitting-room. Mrs. Blake had, by this time, unhooked the lower part of the cage, and when Mab had set the dish of water on a paper on the table, the little girl lifted the bottomless cage over Dickie’s little china tub.

“There now, Dickie bird!” she said.
“Take your bath.”

“Chirr-r-r-r-tweet-tweet-cheep! Chip-

chop-chap burr-r-r-r-r! Sweet!" sang the yellow bird very prettily. Then he flew down, and perched on the edge of the basin filled with water.

"Jump in and splash as much as you like!" laughed Mab. "You can only splash water on the paper, and that won't do any harm. Take your bath, Dickie."

Dickie was just about to take his bath when into the room came rushing Roly-Poly. The little dog was trying to bark and growl and whine all at once, and Oh! such funny sounds as he made. He tried to jump up in Mab's lap as she sat in a chair near the table where Dickie, the canary, was about to take his bath.

"Why, Roly-Poly—you act as though you were frightened!" cried Mab. "Did anything happen to you?"

Just then Harry, or Hal, came in the room, and when the little dog saw him, Roly-Poly ran and hid under the sofa.

"Why did he do that?" asked Mab, in surprise.

"Well, I guess maybe it's because I

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tried to doctor his sore nose, where the cat scratched it," Hal said.

"I should think he would have been glad for you to do that," spoke Mab. "What did you do?"

"Well, I couldn't find Aunt Lolly to ask her for a rag and some salve, or ointment," went on Hal, "so I just took a piece of sticky fly paper, and tried to stick that on Roly's nose!"

"Oh my! No wonder he ran away from you!" laughed Mab. "You mustn't do anything like that, Hal!"

"Mustn't I?"

"No, indeed! Come on out, Roly-Poly. I won't let Hal put any sticky fly paper on your nose!" said Mab. Roly-Poly seemed to know what she said, for he put out his head from under the sofa, and Hal patted his pet. He did not really mean to hurt Roly, only he thought the sticky fly paper would be good for the doggie's scratched nose.

By this time Dickie, the bird, was splashing about in his little white bath-

tub. He would dip in his wings, and then his bill, and scatter the water all over his back. Then he would sit down in it and shake himself and fluff out his feathers.

"Oh, he's trying to swim, like a goldfish!" cried Mab.

"It does look so," agreed Hal. "Oh, what would happen if he *should* turn into a goldfish, Mab."

"He couldn't, 'cause a fish hasn't any feathers. But if Dickie was a goldfish I'd love him just the same."

"So would I," spoke Hal, "only he couldn't sing. Goldfishes can't sing."

"Well, maybe they can do something else. Anyhow Dickie isn't going to be a fish. He's stopped taking his bath now."

The little yellow bird had hopped out of his white china tub, and was drying his feathers in the sun, which shone in brightly on the table.

"I'll fix his cage with clean paper, and you can give him fresh water and seed, and we'll hang him up so he'll dry," said Mother Blake.

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"Oh, let's hang his cage outside by the grape arbor," cried Mab. "It is nice and warm to-day, and when Dickie hears the other birds chirping he will sing all the more."

"All right," said Mother Blake. "Dickie can be out of doors for a little while. But we must be sure the cage door is tightly shut, or he might fly out and away."

"Oh, I wouldn't like that!" softly said Mab. "I'd rather he'd turn into a gold-fish than fly away."

So Dickie was hung out under the grape arbor, where he dried his feathers in the sunshine. Then he began to sing very sweetly. Hal and Mab listened to him for a while, and then the little boy next door called for Hal to come and spin tops with him, and the little girl across the street wanted Mab to play dolls on her front porch, so Dickie was left to sing all by himself.

A little later that day, when Mab was tired of playing dolls, she thought of her

pet bird. She ran back to the grape arbor, calling:

“Oh, Dickie! Where are you? Were you lonesome for me? Well, here I am! Sing, Dickie!”

But Mab did not hear the song of Dickie. She looked up at the cage. It was empty!

“Oh, Mother!” cried Mab, running in the house, with tears in her eyes. “Did you bring in my Dickie?”

“No, dear. Isn’t he in his cage?”

“No, Mother. He isn’t out there at all. Come and help me look for him. Oh! I must find him.”

Mrs. Blake went out in the garden with Mab. She looked in the cage but Dickie was not there. The cage door was open.

“Where is he?” asked Mab, with more tears in her eyes.

“I’m afraid he has flown away,” said her mother. “The door must have come open, in some way, and Dickie, hearing the other birds calling to him, flew out.”

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“ Oh, will we ever find him? ”

“ I don't know, my dear. I'm afraid he must be far away by now. But we will leave his cage here, and perhaps he may come back to it.”

“ Hello, what's the matter now? ” asked a jolly voice, and along came Mr. Blake.

“ Oh, Daddy! ” sobbed Mab. “ Dickie has flown away! ”

“ Has he? ” asked Mr. Blake. “ That's too bad. But never mind, little girl, perhaps we can find him. We'll go look in the woods across the meadow. Birds love the woods. Perhaps he is there. Come on, Mab.”

Mr. Blake took the empty cage in one hand, and holding Mab's hand in his other he led the way toward the woods. Hal, seeing his father and sister walking together, called:

“ Where are you going? ”

“ Daddy is going to take me to hunt for my lost Dickie,” said Mab.

“ I'm coming, too! ” cried Hal, and he ran along with his father and sister.

"Oh, I wonder if we'll ever find Dickie," whispered Mab to her brother.

"Maybe," he answered. "Anyhow it will be nice to go bird-hunting with Daddy, and if we don't find your Dickie we may find one just as good."

"You couldn't," said Mab, shaking her head, as she took a firmer hold of her father's hand. "No bird is as nice as my Dickie!"

CHAPTER II

THE CHEER-UP ROBIN

"ISN'T it nice to be walking with Daddy," said Hal, when they were on the edge of the wood.

"Yes," said Mab. "It is. Only I do hope we find Dickie."

"Hush!" exclaimed Mr. Blake in a whisper. "I saw a yellow bird just fly in that bush. Maybe that was your Dickie, Mab."

"Oh, if it only would be!" sighed the little girl.

Softly they went closer to the bush to look. It was a good thing Roly-Poly had been left behind, or he would have made so much noise that he would have scared the birds.

Daddy Blake often took Hal and Mab on walks with him, and they were always

glad to go. But this was the first time they had ever gone bird-hunting with him.

"This is a queer way to go after the birds," whispered Hal. "I thought you always had a gun when you went hunting. But Daddy has only a cage."

"I wouldn't like Daddy to hunt birds with a gun," spoke Mab, softly.

"And I wouldn't do it," said Mr. Blake. "But maybe some day we will go hunting birds and catch them with a 'gun' that won't hurt them."

"What kind of a gun would that be, Daddy?" asked Hal.

"A camera, to take their pictures," answered his father, laughing. "But now we must keep very still, and see if that was Dickie whom I saw fly in this bush."

As I have said, Mr. Blake often took Hal and Mab with him. Once he took them camping, and they lived in a tent in the woods, and you may read about that, and the queer noise they heard, in the "Camping" book. Another time Daddy Blake, with Hal and Mab, went fishing.

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That was when the two children floated off in a boat—but there I know you would rather read all about it in the “Fishing” book than have me tell you here.

And once Daddy Blake had taken Hal and Mab to the circus. After that they went skating and coasting, and when Summer came again the two children went with their father hunting flowers, as I have told you in the book just before this one, called “Daddy Takes Us Hunting Flowers.”

“Daddy is always taking us somewhere,” Mab used to say.

“And we just love to go with him, because he tells us so many nice things about the flowers, the trees and stones we see as we walk along,” said Hal.

“And now Daddy is taking us to hunt birds,” went on Mab. “I do hope I find Dickie!” and Mab gave a long, loud sigh.

“Hush!” whispered Daddy Blake, softly.

He and the two children looked at the

bush. The wind blew aside the leaves, and something yellow was seen fluttering from branch to branch.

"Oh, it *is* Dickie!" cried Hal, out loud, before he thought.

A yellow bird flew out of the bush, and, perching on a tree, not far away, began to sing.

"Oh, Dickie, come into your cage!" begged Mab. "Please come back to me, Dickie!"

"That isn't Dickie," said Mr. Blake, "though it looks like him because that bird is yellow, just as Dickie is. But, if you could get near enough to him you would see that this bird's yellow breast is streaked with reddish brown feathers, and your Dickie canary has none like them, Mab."

"What bird is that, Daddy?" asked Hal, as the little yellow chap sang a happy song, while looking down at the children, his head held on one side.

"It is called a yellow warbler," answered Mr. Blake, "and this bird is only

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one of seventy kinds of warblers we have in this country. They all like warm weather, and when it gets cold here they fly down South to spend the Winter, coming back North in the Spring."

"You are a nice bird, even if you aren't my Dickie," spoke Mab. "I like to hear you sing."

"The warblers are not as good singers as your canary," Mr. Blake told his little girl. "This yellow chap sings as well as any of his kind, but his song is much the same all the while. Listen to him."

Hal and Mab listened while the yellow warbler sang:

"Sweet-sweet-sweet - s w e e t - s w e e t !
Sweeter-sweeter!"

At least that is the way it sounded. Seven "sweet" words coming quickly, one after the other. And when the yellow warbler had sung them once he did it all over again.

"Is that all he can sing?" asked Mab.

"About all, yes. His song is pretty much all alike."

"Then I think I don't want him in my cage. I'll wait until I can find Dickie," little Mab went on.

"I guess you would have hard work to get a yellow warbler to live in a cage," laughed her father. "They are wild birds, and love to stay in the woods. Some of the warblers have very gay and pretty feathers, like this one. Others are about as dull-colored as sparrows. Some warblers like to live in tall trees, others in low bushes and some, like the oven-bird, would rather be nesting on the ground."

"An *oven*-bird, Daddy!" cried Hal. "Does that mean he lives in an *oven* like a pie or cake?"

"Well, no, not exactly," Mr. Blake answered. "I'll tell you about the oven-bird another time. The warblers, like this yellow chap, live on bugs and insects, and that is why they have always to be where it is warm. Bugs cannot live in the cold, and as soon as the weather begins to feel like snow and ice in the air, the warblers know there will soon be no more bugs for

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them to eat, so they fly to the South, and come back North, or 'migrate' as it is called, when Summer is here again. The birds migrate, or fly, mostly at night, and often hundreds of them are killed by dashing against the big lanterns in lighthouses along the coast. The birds seem to be blinded by the glare of the light, and throw themselves against it."

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Mab. "I'm glad my Dickie doesn't—mi-mi-migrate," and she finally managed to say the hard word.

"He seems to have migrated now," said Mr. Blake. "I don't see a sign of him. I'm afraid Dickie has gone far away."

"Let's look a little more," spoke Hal. "Maybe we'll find him. And if we see any other birds will you tell us about them, Daddy?"

"Yes," promised Mr. Blake, "I will."

Daddy and the two children walked on through the woods. Mab's father carried the empty cage in which Dickie used to live.

"There's another bird!" suddenly called Hal. "But it's colored blue, not yellow."

"Then it can't be my Dickie," said Mab, "unless he fell into a tub of blueing water, where somebody was washing clothes."

Just then through the woods sounded a loud cry of:

"Jay! Jay! Jay!"

"What's that?" whispered Hal.

"That's your blue bird, singing," answered Mr. Blake. "It was a blue jay you saw. There he is!"

The children saw a large bird with blue feathers, striped here and there with black and white, and with a crest of feathers on his head. He was perched on a limb of a high tree, looking down at them.

"Jay! Jay! Jay!" cried the bird, and from somewhere in the woods another answered him.

"Hay! Hay! Hay!"

"He sounds like a rusty, squeaky hinge on a barn door," said Mab.

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“That’s what he does,” spoke her father. “The blue jay is not a sweet-singing bird, and he is a great pest and tease, sometimes. He often makes a noise like a hawk, just to frighten other small birds for the fun of it. And a jay is like a crow, for wanting to take bright, shining things away to hide. I once saw where a blue jay had hidden a thimble, a pair of scissors, some bits of tin and glass, and a pair of spectacles, all in a hole in a tree.”

“Why did he do that?” asked Mab.

“No one knows,” answered Mr. Blake. “I guess he just liked the shine of them.”

“He couldn’t *eat* them,” Hal said.

“No,” Daddy answered. “A blue jay, like his cousin the crow, eats worms, bugs and grain and seeds. Sometimes jays, like crows, will eat the eggs of other birds, and a crow is very fond of hen or turkey eggs. Crows also like clams, or muscles, and I have seen a crow take a small clam up in the air in his claws, drop it on a stone to break the hard shell, and then fly down to pick out the meat.”

"A crow is smart, isn't he, Daddy?" asked Mab.

"Indeed he is, and so is a blue jay. They are among the wisest birds we have. But I think this blue jay is not wise enough to tell us where Dickie has flown, Mab, though I wish he could."

"There he goes!" cried Hal, as the big blue bird flew away.

Daddy and the children walked on, and pretty soon they came to a field on the other side of the wood.

"Oh, look at the funny man in the field!" cried Hal. "What ragged clothes he has, and what a funny, flapping hat."

"And his arms stick out straight," said Mab. "And see how still he stands, not like a real man at all."

"He isn't," laughed Daddy Blake. "He is only a make-believe man—a scarecrow, which the farmer has put up in his field, where he has planted corn, to keep away the crows. The crows love to dig up, and eat, the kernels of corn the farmer puts in the ground. Sometimes they pull

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up the corn just when it has sprouted, and the tender leaves are showing green above the brown earth."

"The scarecrow doesn't keep them away," said Hal. "Look, there's a big black bird eating corn now; and he's right near the make-believe man with the ragged coat. Is he a crow?"

"Yes, that is a crow," said Daddy Blake. "Indeed he doesn't seem to fear the stuffed image the farmer has made. Crows are very wise, and this one must know that is only a make-believe man.

"Though crows do eat corn, they also eat many bugs and worms that would do much harm to the farmer's crops if left to grow. So crows do more good than they do harm, even though they may eat the eggs in hens' nests. Some crows can be tamed, and it is said they can be taught to talk, but I never heard one."

"I want to see how that scarecrow is made," said Hal, and as he started across the field the big black bird, with a flapping of wings, rose in the air, calling:

“Caw! Caw! Caw!”

“It sounds just as if he were laughing at us,” said Mab.

“Perhaps he is laughing at the scarecrow,” said Daddy Blake.

“It’s only some old clothes, stuffed with straw, and stuck on a pole,” called Hal, as he looked at the make-believe man in the corn field. “That wouldn’t fool anybody.”

“I don’t believe it fools the crows very much,” spoke Daddy Blake. “But we had better be getting back home, I think. It is late.”

“And can’t we find Dickie?” asked Mab, with tears just starting to come in her eyes.

“We’ll look again to-morrow,” her father promised. “Maybe we’ll find him then. We’ll leave the cage out under the grape arbor all night, and in the morning Dickie may be back in it.”

Daddy and the children went home. Mab was feeling sad, but Uncle Penny-wait was so jolly when she got to the house,

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and said such funny things, that Mab and Hal had to laugh. Then they ran out in the front yard, for they heard one of their little playmates calling.

"Wait a minute and I'll give you a penny," said Uncle Pennywait.

He gave Hal and Mab each five cents.

"These are *big* pennies!" laughed Hal.

"Don't spend them all for lollypops," begged Aunt Lolly, as the children ran out.

"We'll get ice cream, and give Jennie and Sammie some," spoke Mab, waving to their playmates on the front porch.

That night Mab dreamed that Dickie had come back to his cage, and she was so happy that she arose early the next morning to look. But the cage under the grape arbor was still empty, and Mab felt sad.

"Oh, Dickie, I'll never see you again!" she said, and two big tears rolled down from her eyes, slid down her little nose, as if they were having a sleigh ride, and splashed on the board walk.

"Oh dear!" sighed Mab. "I'm so sad."

And then, all of a sudden, from the top of the cherry tree in the orchard, some one called:

"Cheer-up! Cheer-up! Cheer-up!"

"What's that?" asked Hal, who had come out after Mab. "Who is telling you to cheer up?"

"It's a robin," said Daddy Blake, from the dining-room window. "That's a cheer-up robin, telling you not to be sad, Mab. Don't cry, now. After breakfast I'll take you on another bird-hunt, and I'll try to get some pictures with my camera."

"Oh fine!" cried Hal. "Daddy is going to take us walking again. Hurray!"

Mab smiled, and dried her tears. The "cheer-up" robin had sung his happy song just in time.

CHAPTER III

SUCH A LITTLE BIRD

“LET us first look at the robin, before we go for a walk,” said Daddy Blake, putting his picture camera down on a bench under the grape arbor. “Who sees him first?”

“I do!” cried Mab, pointing. “He’s in a tree right over my head!”

“Where?” asked Hal, eagerly.

“Come here and I’ll show you,” offered Mab, and she took her brother’s head between her hands and turned it around until his eyes saw the robin.

“Oh, he’s got a red vest on!” cried the little boy. “How pretty it is.”

“Almost as pretty as my red dress,” said Mab, “only it isn’t so bright. What makes a robin have red feathers, Daddy?”

“ I don’t know, Mab, any more than I know why you have such nice blue eyes. But a robin is really a thrush, and was only named ‘ robin ’ because when folks came over from England to settle in this country, and saw this big bird, with red feathers on his breast, he looked like their smaller robin, so they gave this bird the same name. However, robin is as good a name as any, I suppose. I wonder if we could find this bird’s nest? Sometimes robins build low-down homes in trees, or bushes, where one can look in, and easily see the little birds.”

“ Cheer-up! Cheer-up! Cheer-up! ” joyfully sang the robin, and then he flew down on the ground near where Daddy Blake and the children stood, and, after looking sharply at a certain place, suddenly pulled up a big, long angle worm.

“ Oh look! ” cried Mab. “ How did the robin know the worm was there? He pulled it right up out of the ground.”

“ I don’t know whether he heard the worm crawling, or whether he saw it

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sticking its head out of its front door of the underground house," said Daddy Blake. "But, anyway, he has the worm, and if we watch we may see where he flies with it. There will be his nest."

As the robin flew away with the worm in its bill, the children and Daddy Blake watched. They saw the red-breasted bird fly into an old apple tree.

"Now come softly, and perhaps we may see the little birds," said Daddy Blake. "And I'll try to get some pictures of them, if we see the nest."

Softly the children followed their father over the grass. Then Mr. Blake said:

"Quiet now! The mother robin is feeding the little ones. When she goes away, we'll go look in the nest."

In a moment the big robin flew away once more, to look for another worm. Then Mr. Blake went over on his tip-toes, parted the leaves of the tree, and could look down into the nest. In it there were four baby robins, with just a few feathers on, for they were only out of the

egg a few days, and bits of the blue shell were scattered about.

"Let me see!" begged Mab, and her father lifted her up. As Mab peeped down in the nest the baby robins opened their mouths so wide that it seemed the little girl could look all the way inside them.

"Why do they do that?" asked Mab.

"Because they are hungry," answered her father. "They get used to opening their mouths as soon as they hear a sound, or feel anything move near the nest. They think you are their mother, come to feed them."

"Would they take a worm if I gave it to them?" Mab asked.

"I think they would."

"Oh, here's one! Let me try it!" begged Hal, who found a worm crawling on the ground. "Lift me up, Daddy!"

Mr. Blake lifted the little boy up in his other arm, still holding Mab, and then Hal carefully lowered the long worm down into the open mouth of one of the tiny rob-

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ins. The others pushed and shoved, making queer little peeping sounds, for they, too, wanted to be fed.

"Now, I want to get a picture of the little birds in the nest," said Daddy Blake, setting the children down. "Then we must go away, for if the papa and mamma robins see us near their nest they may be frightened, and we don't want to trouble them."

With his camera, Mr. Blake took a picture of the little birds in the nest, and when he had stepped back the children heard loud, harsh cries somewhere in the air above them.

"The big robins have come back and seen us," said Daddy Blake. "They are afraid we will harm them."

"They're not crying. 'Cheer-up!' now," said Mab.

"No, for they are not happy when they think their nest is in danger," Daddy Blake answered. "We must go away, and hunt for some other birds."

As Mr. Blake, Hal and Mab walked

away from the old apple tree, where the nest was built, they heard the robins singing:

“Cheer-up! Cheer-up! Cheer-up!”

“Now they are happy again,” Mab said.

“What was the robins’ nest made of, Daddy?”

“Of grass, tree roots, leaves and twigs, all woven in and out. It is held together with mud, which the robins put smoothly on the inside with their bills, as a mason does his mortar. Sometimes, if robins do not build their nest under a shelter of some leaves, or tree branches, when the rain comes it softens the mud, and the nest falls apart. Then the blue eggs may drop down and be broken; or the little birds killed.”

“The little robins were very hungry,” said Mab.

“Yes,” answered her father, “every day, when he is small, and growing, a little robin eats in food more than he, himself, weighs. Just think, Hal! You weigh about fifty pounds, and how would you like to eat fifty pounds of food every day?”

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"If it was candy or ice cream I'd like it," Hal said.

"I'm afraid you'd soon tire of even that," laughed Daddy Blake. "It keeps the father and mother robins busy bringing worms, bugs and other things for the little birds. When they grow old enough to fly they can feed themselves. Sometimes a mother robin will raise two families in one Summer.

"Then, when it gets cold, and Jack Frost is about to visit us, the robins fly South, coming back in the Spring, often to the same place where they nested before."

"Where are we going now?" asked Hal, as his father led him and Mab across the fields toward the woods.

"To hunt for some other birds. I want to get more pictures in my camera."

"Oh, but I wanted to look, and see if Dickie had come back in his cage," said Mab.

"Wait until we reach home again," her father said. "Now we are going to look

for a—" But before he finished what he was saying, all of a sudden through the woods sounded a call like:

"Teacher! Teacher! Teacher!"

"Why! What's that?" cried Hal, in surprise.

"It sounds just like in school," spoke Mab. "What is it, Daddy?"

"It's a bird."

"A bird!" cried Hal and Mab together.

"What kind of a bird calls 'Teacher?'"

"The teacher-bird," answered Mr. Blake, with a laugh. "It is also called the oven-bird."

"Oh, that's the one you said you were going to tell us about," said Mab. "Why is it called oven-bird?"

"Because its nest is built on the ground, with a curved top to it, just like an old-fashioned Dutch oven."

"And it must be called the teacher-bird because it seems to say the word teacher," spoke Hal.

"That's it!" exclaimed Daddy Blake. "It is also called the golden-crowned

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thrush. But come, we will see if we can find the nest of one, and it is not going to be easy, let me tell you."

Through the woods wandered the children with Daddy Blake, looking for the oven-bird's nest. They could hear the birds themselves, calling "Teacher! Teacher!" in trees here and there.

The oven-bird is really one of the warbler family, and is a sweet singer, though the cry of "teacher," so often heard, is not very pretty. It is when flying high in the air that the oven-bird really sings his best, and this song is not often heard.

"There is an oven bird on the ground!" said Daddy Blake suddenly, and Hal and Mab, looking where he pointed, saw a little brown bird, with some olive green feathers, hopping about. It was about as large as a sparrow, and on top of its head was a patch of orange-colored feathers in the shape of the letter V.

"Oh, the nest must be near here!" cried Hal, springing forward so quickly that he caught his foot under the root of a tree,

and down he went on his face with a grunt of surprise.

"Up you come!" cried Daddy Blake, lifting Hal. "Are you hurt?"

"N—no, I guess not," was the answer. Hal felt all over himself, and put his hand in his pocket. "I'm not hurt," he said at last. "But my stick of candy is broken. But I don't care 'cause I was going to break it, anyhow, to give Mab half. Here's your piece, Sister," and he handed half the candy to Mab.

"Well, the oven-bird flew away when you fell, Hal," said his father, "so we will have to look again for one."

In a little while they saw another of the queer "teacher" birds on the ground.

"We will watch where he goes," said Mr. Blake. "Look for a little clump of leaves and twigs on the ground. That will be the nest."

Mab and Hal looked carefully, and several times they thought they had found what they were seeking, but each time it

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was just a bunch of leaves, or grass, and not a nest at all.

Then, all of a sudden, a bird flew down out of a tree and began fluttering along on the ground, dragging its wings among the leaves.

"Oh look!" cried Mab. "The poor bird has a broken wing, Daddy! I'm going to take it home with me, and cure it."

The little girl went toward the bird which fluttered feebly, and waited until Mab was almost able to touch it. Then it fluttered on a little farther, just out of reach.

"You almost had it then!" cried Hal.

"Yes," said his sister. "I'll get it this time, sure." Again she was almost ready to put her hand on the bird when it fluttered away a little farther. Mab followed, sure that the bird was so hurt that it could not fly. Hal walked after his sister, but Mr. Blake stood still.

Suddenly the bird, which had been making sharp, piping sounds, rose up in the air and flew away.

"Why!" cried Mab. "It didn't have a broken wing at all."

"No," said her father, smiling. "The bird only pretended to be hurt so you would follow, and try to get it."

"Why did it do that?" asked Hal.

"To draw you away from its nest. You were too near, and the bird knew you would follow and try to pick him up. Then, when you were far enough away from the nest to make sure it was safe, the game was over and the bird flew away. That was an oven-bird, but it is not the only one who plays that trick. Now come back here, and I'll show you the nest, and then we'll take a picture of it."

Down among the dried leaves, near where Mr. Blake stood, he showed the children a little round pile of grass. Stooping over, Hal and Mab could look into the nest and see some tiny eggs lying on the soft lining, made of fine roots of wild plants.

"Here is where the oven-bird is going to hatch out the little ones," said Daddy

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Blake. "I'll get a picture of her on her nest."

"How can you, when she isn't here?" asked Hal.

"I'll set the camera here, and then we'll go away and hide in the bushes, and wait for her to come back," said Mr. Blake. "When I see her on her nest I'll pull a long string and snap her picture."

Daddy put the camera where its glass eye could look right in through the opening of the little nest. It was rounded on top, just like an old Dutch oven, in which pie and bread could be baked. A streak of sun shone down through the trees, right on the nest so there would be light enough to make a picture.

Mr. Blake fixed the camera, and then he tied a long thread to the spring that was on the shutter. When this string was pulled it opened the shutter, just as you raise your eyelids and open your eyes. And, when the camera shutter opened, then a picture of the oven-bird would

come in through the glass eye, and thus be made.

Taking the other end of the string Mr. Blake, with Hal and Mab, hid off in the bushes, where they could look at the oven-bird's nest without being seen. They waited a little while and then they heard the call:

"Teacher! Teacher!"

"The birds are coming back," whispered Mr. Blake.

A few minutes later the mother bird flew down to the ground near her oven-like nest. She looked all around and then, seeing no danger, in she hopped to cover the eggs and keep them warm. Mr. Blake waited until she was nicely settled and then he pulled the string.

"Click!" went the camera and the bird's picture was taken. The bird flew away when Mr. Blake came out of the bushes to lift up the camera, but when he and the children had gone she came back to again warm her eggs, so the little birds would grow big, and pick their way out.

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"Well, we have two nice bird pictures now," said Daddy Blake, when they got home that afternoon. "To-morrow we may get more. Some day I hope to be able to get a bird to take its own picture."

"How can you do that, Daddy?" asked Hal.

"Oh, I'll show you after a while," said his father, while Mab went to look in the cage to see if Dickie had come back.

But he had not and the little girl was sad.

"Never mind," said Aunt Lolly, "you still have your dog Roly-Poly, Mab."

"But he can't sing."

"He can bark!" cried Hal. "And maybe you could put him in the cage, and make believe he was a bird, Mab!"

"That would be funny!" and she laughed to think of Roly-Poly in a bird cage.

The next morning, when Daddy Blake again started out for a walk with Hal and Mab, the children went along in the garden, to pick some flowers to take to a lady who lived down the street. She was ill,

and Mrs. Blake wanted to send some bright blossoms to cheer her.

“Oh, look what a funny bug!” cried Hal, as he stood near a honeysuckle vine.

“It’s a bee!” said Mab. “Look out or it will sting you!”

“No, it’s a bird,” spoke her father, coming near. “It is not a bee.”

“Oh, such a little bird!” exclaimed Hal. “Can it really be a bird, Daddy?”

“Yes. If it will only be still for a second you will see that it is a bird, with two feet, and you know a bee has more legs than that.”

“Oh, such a little bird!” Hal cried again, as he and Mab watched the tiny creature, which had a spot of deep red under its throat.

CHAPTER IV

THE NIGHT-HAWK

PRETTY soon the tiny bird hovered in one place over a honeysuckle blossom. The wings kept fluttering and whirring so fast that they looked only like a blurr of light, as does an electric fan when it is going fast. But Hal and Mab could see that the creature was really a bird, and not a bee.

"What kind of a bird is it?" asked Mab.

"A ruby-throated humming bird," answered Daddy Blake. "If you watch closely you will see him put his long, slender bill, as thin as a knitting needle, down in the flower to suck up the sweet juice on which it lives."

The children saw something like a long tongue thrust out, and down into the deep throat of the honeysuckle. Just as the bird

did this Daddy Blake snapped his camera.

"Another picture!" he cried. "Our bird hunting is coming along very well."

"There goes the humming bird!" cried Mab, as the tiny creature flew up in the air.

"Why, it's out of sight already!" said Hal.

"Yes, they are so small they are hard to see," spoke Daddy Blake. "That is why they are not easily caught, or killed, by other birds. The humming bird is the smallest one we have in this country, and the only kind that visits us is this one with the ruby-red throat. In the South tropical forests, where it is always warm, there are many humming birds, but only this little fellow is brave enough to spend the Summer with us. He flies from South America to Canada, and back again, every year. Just think how many, many times his little wings must flutter to carry him over all those hundreds of miles."

"Doesn't he get tired?" asked Mab.

"Yes, but he stops and goes to sleep in

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a morning-glory flower bed to rest, I suppose," said Daddy, with a smile.

"And are they just like other birds?" asked Hal.

"Well, like them in a good many ways, but only a humming bird can reach the sweet juices that are far down in such flowers as the honeysuckle, the nasturtium, the canna, the phlox or the trumpet-vine. It takes a long, slender bill to reach down inside these blossoms.

"Humming birds love garden flowers and often come back to them year after year. Perhaps I can find you a nest to show you how little it is."

"The eggs must be little, too," said Mab.

"They are," her father answered, as he looked here and there in the bushes for the nest. At last he found it.

Such a tiny nest as it was! and in it was a little humming bird.

"This one hasn't any red on his throat," said Hal, as the tiny creature fluttered away.

“No, for that is the mother bird, and she is not as prettily colored as is the father humming bird. But the mother bird is the nest maker, and see what a dear little home she has made for her babies.”

The nest was like a little cup, made from the cotton of the milk-weed plant which Hal and Mab had seen when Daddy took them flower hunting, as I told you in the other book. Down in the little cup, which was fastened to the limb of a tree on which it could hardly be seen, were two tiny eggs, no larger than beans.

“And will little birds come out of them?” asked Mab, after her father had taken a picture of the nest.

“Yes, and when the baby birds break out of the shell they are no larger than honey bees. But they are real birds, with feathers and feet, though they have no feathers at first. About three weeks after they are hatched they will be ready to fly. Then they will go fluttering about, putting their long, slender bills down inside the honey-flowers. They may also eat little

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bugs, so small that we could hardly see them."

"And to think a little bird like that can fly all the way to South America!" cried Hal. "It's wonderful!"

"It surely is," said his father.

Over the fields and through the woods Daddy Blake took the children hunting birds. As they walked along Hal suddenly stood still.

"Hark!" called the little boy.

"What is it?" asked his father.

"Some one is knocking on the door," Hal answered.

Then Mab heard:

"Tap! Tap! Tap!"

"Oh, Daddy, what is it?" she asked.

"There are no doors in the woods."

"I think I can show you what kind of a bird is making that noise," spoke Daddy Blake.

"Was it a bird which made that funny noise?" asked Hal.

"Yes. Listen."

"Tap! Tap! Tap!" sounded again.

"There he is!" cried Daddy Blake. "A red-headed woodpecker!" and he pointed to a tree on the trunk of which, with his red head pointed toward the sky, was perched a bird. Back and forth went his red-topped head, so fast that to Hal and Mab it seemed scarcely to move. But it was moving, and with his bill the woodpecker was drilling holes in the bark of the tree to get out the bugs and worms underneath.

"It sounds just as if he were tapping on the tree so some fairy inside would open the door and let him in," laughed Hal.

"Woodpeckers do go inside trees," said Daddy Blake. "They drill, or bore out, with their strong bills, a hole large enough for a nest. In that the mother bird lays her eggs, and hatches out the little ones. We will see if we can't get a little closer to this woodpecker, and watch how he can hold himself on a straight up-and-down trunk of a tree, as a fly holds himself on a wall."

The woodpecker was not frightened

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when the children came closer. Perhaps he was too busy drilling holes to find bugs. But Hal and Mab could see that this bird's claws were not like those of others. The woodpecker has two toes in front and two behind, and with these he can get a good hold on even a small piece of bark. The woodpecker only drills holes in rough-barked trees, for on a smooth bark he could not hold himself, and, besides, there are no bugs or worms on that sort of a tree, for there are no cracks in the bark where they can hide.

"Tap! Tap! Tap!" went the red-headed woodpecker, circling around the tree, and, when he had made a hole, and saw a bug he thrust out his tongue, which was sharp and strong, and could be put far beyond his bill, just as a humming bird can put out his tongue. And when the woodpecker had the bug on his tongue, that was the end of the bug.

"Why, he looks just as if he sat on his tail!" cried Mab.

"Yes," said her father, "the wood-

pecker's tail is of short, strong feathers, and he spreads that out and props himself up on the end of it as he clings to the trunk of a tree tapping for his dinner. Chimney swallows and bobolinks do the same thing. Their tails are made stiff to help them stand up straight on the side of a tree, or barn."

"A woodpecker would be good for an alarm clock," said Hal. "He could come and tap on your bedroom door in the morning and wake you up."

"But he might tap a hole in the door," spoke Mab.

"Yes, so he might," agreed her brother. "I guess I don't want any woodpeckers to wake me up. They might peck my toes," and he laughed at the idea.

Daddy Blake told of other woodpeckers than the red-headed kind. There is a downy one and a hairy one, though he really has feathers instead of hairs. And then there is the "sap-sucker". This woodpecker drills holes in trees in the Spring when the sap, or juice, is flowing,

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and sucks it, for the sap is sweet, and he likes it. Sometimes sap-suckers kill trees by drilling too many holes in them. Then, when there is no more sap, the bird eats bugs as his cousins do.

It was evening when Daddy Blake, with Hal and Mab, came back from the woods, having seen many birds, and "hunted" others with the camera, getting pictures of several of them.

The sun had set and in the evening, after supper, the children were out in the yard. Suddenly they heard a harsh cry in the air over their heads.

There came another sound, a sound the wind sometimes makes as it moans and whistles through a half-opened door, or around the corner of the house:

"Whoo-ee-oo-ee-oo-ee!"

"What's that!" cried Hal.

"Look up!" said his father. "Look up and see!"

Hal and Mab looked, and saw quite a large bird, which seemed to be coasting down out of the sky. His wings half

closed formed his sled, and the air was his hill.

“Oh, he’ll hit the ground and be killed!” cried Hal.

“Watch,” said Mr. Blake quietly.

Just before the bird reached the earth he quickly spread out his wings, and shot upward and off to one side, uttering his wild cry.

“What is it?” asked Mab.

“A night-hawk,” answered Daddy Blake. “And he is flying about to catch his supper of mosquitoes and gnats.”

“Oh, tell us about him!” begged Hal. “How swiftly he slid down from the clouds.”

“I wish he could talk,” spoke Mab softly. “I would ask him if he had seen my Dickie.”

CHAPTER V

THE BIRD'S PICTURE

THE night hawk, which Daddy Blake had pointed out to Hal and Mab, was now flying back and forth, sometimes high in the air and again close down near the ground.

"What's he doing, Daddy?" asked Hal.

"Catching bugs and mosquitoes," answered Mr. Blake.

"I wish he'd catch all the mosquitoes there are!" exclaimed Mab, rubbing one fat, chubby leg with the opposite foot. "I'm all itchy now, where they bit me. How does a night-hawk catch 'em, Daddy?"

"He flies around with his mouth open, and grabs all the bugs he can see."

"Even in the dark?" asked Hal.

"Yes," his father said. "The night-hawk, whose other names are bull-bat,

night-jar and mosquito-hawk, can see quite well in the dark, just as can an owl. All birds that have to fly about, to get their meals from bugs in the air, have good eyes."

"Well," spoke Mab, as she scratched her other leg, "if the mosquito-hawk can see in the dark, I wish he'd come in my room after mother puts the light out, and I go to sleep, and then the bird could catch all the mosquitoes before they bit me."

"That would be fun!" laughed Hal. "Do you s'pose we could have a hawk in the house, Daddy?"

"I'm afraid not, Hal. He might nip your toes or your nose by mistake."

"Oh, then I wouldn't want him!" cried Mab. "Oh, see how fast he flies up, Daddy."

"Yes, he is going up for another ride down hill."

"I don't see any hill," spoke Hal.

"Well, the hill is made of air, and that's why you can't see it," his father explained. "The night-hawk flies away up high, just

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as if he were climbing a hill, and when he gets to the top he partly folds his wings and coasts down. Here he comes."

Down came the bird faster than at first. There was a queer moaning, or whistling, sound in the air that the children had noticed before.

"What makes that?" asked Hal.

"The wind blowing through the bird's feathers," explained Mr. Blake. "There he goes after more bugs," and away darted the mosquito-hawk over the meadow. It was quite dark now, but the bird seemed able to see no matter how black it was, though I suppose if there were no light at all they could not use their eyes, sharp as they are.

"Do they only fly at night?" asked Mab.

"Oh, no. Toward the end of summer the night-hawks may be seen in the daytime. I guess maybe they don't find so many bugs out at night, then.

"When Winter is near, the night-hawk, like most other birds, flies to the warm

South, and the little hawks, that the mother bird has hatched out, fly away too."

"What kind of a nest do they make?"

Hal wanted to know.

"No nest at all," answered Mr. Blake.

Hal and Mab looked at one another and then at Daddy Blake. Sometimes their father played little jokes on them. This might be one.

"Well, where does the mother night-hawk lay her eggs?" asked Mab.

"In any place where they will be safe, and where the sun will shine on them in the daytime," answered Mr. Blake. "One of the best places is on the flat roof of a house, right in a big city. The night-hawk seems to like to raise her family in the city because there are so many lights to draw the bugs around them. And you may often see bats, and night-hawks, circling around under electric lights, catching bugs in their open mouths.

"I have often seen, on the flat roof of a building, the two speckled eggs of the night-hawk, and they looked so much like

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the gravel on the roof that it was hard to tell which was which. If the mother hawk can't find a roof, a flat rock will do just as well.

"The whippoorwill is another bird that makes no nest. She lays her eggs in the woods, though, but they look so much like the dead leaves, sticks and bits of bark all around them that you might be close to them, and would not see them."

"Whippoorwill! What a funny name for a bird!" exclaimed Hal.

"He is called that because his song seems to sound like those words," Daddy Blake said. "The whippoorwill flies about, nearly always at night, and catches bugs just as the mosquito-hawk does."

Hal and Mab watched the night-hawk darting about, turning quickly this way and that as he saw a bug that was trying to get away.

"I wish I could fly in the air," said Hal.

"I don't," spoke his sister. "I'd be afraid of falling."

Just then Aunt Lolly called:

"Mab! Mab! Come here and see something queer."

The two children ran to their aunt. She had just lighted the gas in the sitting-room, and she stood in the middle of the floor pointing to the bird cage, which, since Dickie had flown away, now stood empty on a table.

"Oh, is my birdie back?" asked Mab, as she looked toward the cage.

"No, but there is *something* in there," Hal said.

"Indeed there is!" laughed Aunt Lolly.

Mab saw something silky and black in the bird cage. She went closer. Then she cried:

"Oh, it's my cat, Velvet! She crawled in the bird cage to go to sleep!" And that was what, Velvet, the black cat had done. She purred happily when Mab put her fingers through the wires and rubbed the soft fur.

"It's a good thing your bird Dickie isn't in the cage now," said Hal. "If he was there he wouldn't be there."

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"How could that be?" asked Mab.
"If he was there he wouldn't be there?"

"Why, Velvet would eat him up and then Dickie would be inside the cat."

"He would not!" cried Mab. "Velvet wouldn't eat my nice bird; would you, Velvet? She never even jumped for Dickie when I had my bird. And I wish I had him here now. Oh, I do wish I had Dickie!" and Mab's voice was sad.

"Never mind," said Hal. "To-morrow we'll go hunting birds with Daddy again, and maybe we'll find your canary."

"No," said Mab, slowly shaking her head, "I don't ever believe we'll get Dickie back."

Hal and Mab were up early the next morning. After breakfast they went out in the barn where Daddy had a little workshop or office which he called his "den." Mr. Blake was busy there, and a camera was on the table in front of him.

"Oh, Daddy! What are you doing!" asked Hal.

"I'm making something so a bird

can take its own picture," was the answer.

"Oh, Daddy!" cried Mab! "Now you're joking with us, I know you are!"

"No, I'm not," said her father. "I really am going to try to make a bird take its own picture."

"How?" asked Hal, for he sometimes took pictures himself with a little camera he had received for Christmas.

"Well," said Mr. Blake, "you remember the time I took the picture of the bird, when we were hidden in the bushes. I fastened a string to the shutter of the camera, and pulled it to open and close the glass eye of my picture machine. Now I am going to try and have a bird itself pull the string."

"But how can you?" asked Mab. "You can't talk to a bird, and tell it to pull the string. Maybe you could if it was a parrot, for they seem to know what you say to them. But there are no parrots around here."

"Yes, there is!" cried Hal. "Mrs.

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Jackson has a parrot, and it says 'Hello' and 'Pretty Poll' and lots of things. You could take a picture of that, Daddy."

"I'd rather get pictures of wild birds," said Mr. Blake. "But I think I can make the bird pull the camera string without speaking to it, which, if I did, might frighten him away."

"How are you going to do it?" Mab wanted to know.

"You'll soon see," spoke her father. "Pretty soon we'll go to the woods again, and hunt some more birds with the kind of a gun that never hurts."

"Oh, won't that be fun!" cried Hal. "To see a bird take its own picture!"



CHAPTER VI

THE WREN HOUSE

WHEN Daddy Blake finished work on his camera it was all ready to take a bird's picture, or even make a bird do it himself. Into his pockets Mr. Blake put some bits of string, and other things. Then he said:

"Well, children, now we'll have another try at finding Mab's pet canary. We'll go to the woods once more, hunting birds."

And you can imagine that Hal and Mab were very much delighted. They hurried along, hand in hand, Daddy following behind, carrying the camera. The way to the woods was across a little brook, where there was a bridge which Daddy Blake had built of logs and wood, so that it looked like a rustic bench for the lawn. Across

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the brook, near the bridge, was a fallen tree that was a sort of bridge, too. Sometimes Velvet, the black cat, ran across on the fallen log instead of going over the bridge.

“And that’s what I’m going to do now!” cried Hal. “If Velvet can walk across on the log so can I.”

“Better not,” spoke Mr. Blake. “The log is slippery, and Velvet has sharp claws which she can stick in to hold on by, but you have not.”

But Hal had already run on ahead and started across the log. And, then, just what Daddy Blake feared would happen did happen. Hal began to slide and slip, for the log across the brook was wet and slippery.

“Oh, Daddy! Oh, Mab!” cried the little boy. “I’m falling! I’m slipping!”

He waved his hands in the air, trying to keep himself on the log, but he slipped farther and farther over until:

“Splash!”

Hal was in the water, all of a sudden.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Mab, three times, as she saw her brother fall.

"He's all right," said Daddy Blake, laughing. "The water isn't deep, and it's a warm day."

Hal had fallen in feet first, and as the brook was only over the tops of his shoes he was not much wet. Some water had splashed up on his waist, but that would soon dry in the sun.

"Now, Hal, you see what happened," said Daddy Blake. "I told you that you had no claws, as Velvet has, to stick in the sharp log."

"I—I wish I had claws, or paws—or—or something!" Hal said, looking down at his feet which he could see through the clear water, as it bubbled along over the mossy stones on the bottom of the brook.

"Next time you must cross on the bridge," went on Mr. Blake. "Run back to the house, Hal, and get on dry shoes and stockings. Mab and I will wait for you."

Hal waded out to shore and it was not

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long before he was back again, ready to go bird hunting. This time he crossed on the bridge.

The children, with Daddy Blake, were soon in the woods, and while Hal and Mab looked all around, hoping they might catch a sight of Dickie, Mr. Blake began searching for something else.

"What are you looking for?" asked Hal.

"A scratchy, briar bush," answered his father.

"Why, how funny!" laughed Mab. "You don't want to be scratched; do you, Daddy?"

"No, but I am looking for the kind of a bird that loves to build its nest in a briar bush better than anywhere else, and if I find the bush I'm pretty sure to find the bird."

"What kind of a bird is it?" asked Hal.

Just then through the woods there sounded a call like:

"Mew-ay! Mew-ay! Mew-ay!"

"Oh, it's a cat crying!" exclaimed Mab.

"No, it's a catbird," said Mr. Blake, "though it does sound like a lost kitten with a big voice. Listen and you'll hear another song from the same bird."

And Hal and Mab heard a trill that sounded like:

"Zu-utt! Zu-utt! Calico! Calico! Hey! Teely-teely-teely! Hey! Diddle-dee!"

"Oh, what a nice, funny song!" cried Mab. And then again sounded:

"Mew-ay! Mew-ay! Mew-ay!"

"That isn't so pretty," spoke Daddy Blake. "But we know the catbirds are here, so I'll see if I can get one to take its own picture. There must be several nests in this briar patch, so I will set the camera near by," and Mr. Blake pointed out a bush that was all a tangle of vines and brairs, in which the catbird loves to build its nest.

Mr. Blake found a smooth, open place on the ground in the woods near the briar bush. The sun shone on it through the openings in the leafy branches of the trees.

"To take pictures in the woods you

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must have a good light," explained Daddy Blake. "This place will be very good if we can get the catbirds to come to it."

"How are you going to make them?" asked Hal. "Are you going to make a noise like a little kitten?"

"No," answered his father, "for, though the bird is named after a cat, it is only because one of its songs sounds that way. A catbird would really be afraid of a cat."

"But not afraid of Velvet," Mab said. "For she would not hurt any bird."

"Well, maybe not," said Daddy Blake. "But this is how I am going to try to make a bird take its own picture. I am going to fasten two or three strings to the shutter of the camera. If any one of the strings is pulled whoever pulls it will have their picture taken, if they stand in front of the camera's lens, or glass eye. And I hope a catbird will pull one of the strings."

"So do I," said Hal. "But how are you going to get the bird to do it, Daddy?"

"By putting on the other end of the

string something that the bird likes to eat. I have brought along some bread, a bit of meat and some mulberries, that I picked from the tree in our garden. Catbirds, and many other birds, are very fond of mulberries."

"I know about mulberries!" cried Mab. "I learned it in school. Silk worms eat the leaves of mulberry trees."

"That's right," said Daddy Blake. "But birds like to eat the berries instead of the leaves."

The children watched while Mr. Blake fastened a little cluster of mulberries on one string, tied a bit of meat to a second and a piece of bread to a third cord. Then the strings were laid along the ground, each one being fastened to the shutter of the camera.

"Now we'll hide in the bushes," said Daddy Blake, "and watch to see if a catbird will come down and take his own picture."

The cries of the birds had stopped while Mr. Blake was fixing the camera, and lay-

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ing straight the strings. But now, as he and the children hid themselves in the bushes, where they could see the picture machine, they again heard the calls:

“ Mew-ay! Mew-ay! Mew-ay! ”

“ Oh, I hope one comes down to get the piece of meat, or a berry, and takes its photograph! ” whispered Hal.

“ Hush! ” said Mab, putting her little finger over her brother’s lips.

Then they waited. Pretty soon there was a flutter among the leaves of the trees and a large bird, with a long black bill, and sort of slate-gray feathers, fluttered down to the ground. He looked all around, his head first on one side and then on the other, his bright eyes seeming to snap and twinkle. He looked first at the bit of bread, then at the meat and last at the mulberries. It was some time before he had seen such a feast as that. How anxiously Daddy Blake, Mab and Hal waited.

Then the catbird hopped over toward the bit of meat. He looked all about, to make sure it was safe, and then he grabbed

the bit in his bill and pulled it. Of course he pulled the string, too, and the camera went:

“Click!”

“Good!” whispered Daddy Blake, softly. “He has taken his picture.”

And so the catbird had. He had snapped the camera himself. He was startled when he heard that click, but he did not fly away. Pretty soon he began picking at the bit of meat. Then Mab, who was getting tired of hiding behind the bushes, stepped on a dry twig, which broke with a snap louder than that of the camera shutter.

With a flutter of his wings the catbird flew away, calling:

“Mew-ay! Mew-ay! Mew-ay!”

“Oh, dear!” cried Mab. “I didn’t mean to scare him.”

“It’s all right,” said Daddy Blake. “We have his picture, and now we will leave him to eat the rest of the things in peace.” He took the strings off the camera, leaving the bread and berries on the

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ground, and soon the catbirds had eaten them all up.

“Catbirds are very friendly,” said Daddy Blake, “and you can partly tame them. They will sometimes eat out of your hand, and they like almost the same things chickens like. Of course, they like to fly up in a cherry tree, and eat cherries, but we can’t blame them for that, as they also eat many bugs and worms that, otherwise, would kill the vegetables in the garden.

“Catbirds are very good to one another, too. If you disturb the nest of one all the other catbirds living nearby will join in such loud cries that you will be glad to run away to be quiet. And if the father and mother catbirds should be killed, leaving little birds in the nest, some other mother catbird would adopt them, feeding and caring for them with her own little ones, until the orphans were big enough to get along by themselves.”

“I like catbirds,” said Mab.

“So do I,” spoke Hal. “I’m glad Daddy has a picture of one.”

That night, after a long tramp through the woods and over the fields, Daddy Blake printed some pictures of the catbird who took his own photograph.

There he was, in the very act of picking at the bit of meat, just as the children, hidden in the bushes, had seen him. He seemed almost alive in the photograph.

For several days after this Daddy Blake took Hal and Mab hunting other birds, getting a number of pictures of them and their nests. Every time she went to the woods, or over the fields, Mab would look for Dickie, but, though she saw many yellow birds, none of them was her pet, singing canary.

One day Hal and Mab saw their father out in the barn nailing some strips of bark on a little box, in one end of which was a little, round hole.

"What are you making, Daddy," asked Mab, "another picture machine?"

"No, I'm making a house."

"Oh, a play-house or a doll-house?"

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asked Mab, as she watched her brother Hal playing with Roly-Poly.

“ This is to be a wren house,” said Mr. Blake.

“ Oh, I know! A wren is a bird! ” cried Mab, clapping her hands. “ I read a piece in the school-book about Jennie Wren. Is she coming to live in that little house, Daddy? ”

“ Well, Jennie Wren, or some of her friends, I hope,” Daddy Blake said. “ Now come out and we’ll put the house up on a pole in the yard, and then we’ll see what happens.”

CHAPTER VII

FRIGHTENED CHICKENS

HAL and Mab followed Daddy Blake out in the yard. At one end there was an old tree, which had died many years ago, the bark having fallen from it. The children's father had trimmed off the branches, sawed the top square and planted some vines at the foot, so that now they were twined around this queer post, almost to the top.

"There is where we shall put our little house for the wrens," said Mr. Blake, "on top of the post-tree."

"Aren't you going to put any furniture in the little house for the birds?" Mab wanted to know.

"I guess the wrens will bring their own furniture when they move in," said Daddy Blake. "They don't need much, just some

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little twigs, some bits of feathers, perhaps a wisp of hay from the field, and their house is furnished."

"They don't have to have pianos and chairs and tables and dishes and all things like that; do they, Daddy?" asked Hal.

"No, indeed. A bird's life is very simple. You will soon see two wrens setting up housekeeping in this little house, I hope."

"But can they get in such a little front door?" Mab wanted to know, as she put her chubby finger through the round hole in the end of the box, from which the bird house was made. The round hole was just the size of a silver quarter of a dollar—in fact, Mr. Blake had used a quarter to mark a round circle, which he cut out to make the hole.

"Oh, that door is plenty large enough for wrens," he said to the children. "If I made it any larger the English sparrows would crowd in, and drive out the wrens. A sparrow cannot get in this little hole."

“And what are the even littler holes up near the roof of the house?” asked Mab, pointing to them.

“Oh, those are to let in fresh air,” said Mr. Blake. “A bird must have fresh air in his house just as we must. Of course, birds that build nests live in the air all the while, but wrens are different.”

Climbing up on a step ladder, Mr. Blake fastened the wren house on top of the old tree. Then Hal and Mab sat on a bench in the garden, and watched the little box, covered with bits of bark.

“Maybe my Dickie bird will come back and live in this house,” said Mab.

“I’m afraid your bird would be too large to get in,” her father answered. “You will have to forget about Dickie, I fear. He will not come back now, for I think he has been gone too long.”

“Well, I’ll never forget him,” Mab said, “but I will love other birds, too.”

“Daddy, I don’t believe any wrens are ever coming to live in the nice house you made for them,” said Mab that evening

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when she and Hal had spent most of the day in the garden watching the box on the post.

"Oh, you must give them time," her father answered. "The wrens have just begun house-hunting. They'll be here soon, I think."

It was two or three days after this when Hal and Mab were in the kitchen, eating—not bread and honey like the king in Mother Goose, but bread and jam—it was while the children were eating this that Daddy Blake called to them:

"Hal! Mab! Come out quickly. The wrens have come!"

Out rushed the little ones. Perched on the roof of the little house was a tiny, brown bird, singing away at the top of his voice, flittering his wings and tail, and turning his head first on one side and then the other, looking all about with his bright eyes.

"Oh, Daddy! Do you think she'll make her nest there?" asked Mab, eagerly.

"That is the papa bird," said Mr. Blake.

"He generally comes along first, and if he likes the house he begins to furnish it by piling it full of sticks, feathers, hay and other things of which nests are made. Then he brings his wife, the mother bird, and she has to pull out about half what he has put in for he has the place so crowded up that there isn't room for her to lay her eggs."

"Oh, won't it be fun watching the wrens?" cried Hal, in delight.

"It surely will," said his sister.

The papa wren was singing away at a great rate. Suddenly he stopped and flew away.

"Oh, he's gone!" cried Mab, sadly.

"He's gone."

"Only to get something for the house, I think," said her father. "He'll be back in a little while."

And so it happened. Pretty soon, back came flying the tiny brown bird, and in his bill was a feather he had found somewhere. He perched on the little front porch Mr. Blake had made near the round

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hole in the box, and, looking inside as though making sure the house would be a good place to live, in hopped the tiny wren with his feather.

“Now he will be very busy furnishing his house,” said Daddy Blake. And the wren was. As the children watched he flew away and came back with a small twig and, a little later, he brought more feathers and some dried grass.

“Oh, I wish we could see inside!” said Mab.

“I can’t let you now, but when the wrens raise their family of little ones, and fly away then I’ll take the top off the box and let you see the nest inside,” promised Daddy Blake.

The next day, when Hal and Mab, after their breakfast, ran out in the yard, they saw another little brown bird with the first one. Both were singing away, and fluttering here and there about the little house.

“The mamma wren has come!” said Daddy Blake. “Now you will see some busy times.”

Hal and Mab did. Here and there flew the birds after different things with which to build their nest—sticks, feathers, soft grass and tiny twigs. Just as Daddy Blake had said, the papa wren put too much stuff in the tiny house, and had to pull some of it out again. Jennie Wren helped him, and oh! how anxiously he watched lest perhaps she might hurt herself by doing too much housework. The wrens were busy for several days, flying here and there, and how Mr. Wren did sing!

“He sings almost as nice as my Dickie used to,” said Mab.

“He must be very happy,” spoke Hal, and I think he was.

After a while the wrens seemed to have their nest made to suit them. Mrs. Wren was not seen so often now, but Mr. Wren was as busy as ever, singing all day long. Every day Hal and Mab would watch the wren house. They wished they could look in and see the little pink, chocolate spotted eggs which Daddy Blake said were in the nest, but this could not be done.

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“ You would frighten the mamma wren if you did that, and she might fly at you and pick you,” said Daddy Blake.

“ Wouldn’t she be afraid to fly at us? ” asked Mab.

“ No indeed. A mother wren is very brave when she is setting on her eggs to warm them, so the little birds will hatch. If a sparrow or other bird tries to get in her house—Oh, look there! ” suddenly cried Daddy Blake. “ There’s a sparrow now, trying to get in the wren house to build her nest.”

A sparrow was perched in front of Jennie Wren’s door.

“ But she can’t get in, can she, Daddy? ” asked Hal.

“ No. The hole isn’t large enough. But watch what the wren does! ”

As the children looked the mother wren suddenly came to her front door just as if the sparrow had rang the bell. And the mother wren ruffled up her feathers, spread out her tiny tail and flew right at the bigger sparrow, picking at her and

scolding at the top of her voice, just as if she were saying:

“Now you get right away from here, Mrs. Sparrow! The idea of you coming around trying to get in my house! Be off! Go away with you!”

“Cheep! Cheep!” cried the surprised sparrow, and, with her feathers all awry, away she flew.

“She won’t go near that house again!” laughed Daddy Blake. “Mrs. Wren drove her off.”

The little wren stood in her front door, looking out for two or three minutes, scolding away in her shrill voice, and then, as though she felt sure the sparrow had gone for good, back she went to cover her eggs. For if, after the little birds start to hatch, the eggs get cold the little birds will die.

Hal and Mab watched the wren house until, one day, they saw some tiny baby birds hop out. And what fun it was to watch the papa and mamma birds teach their little children to fly. The wrens are

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good birds to have on the farm, for they eat many bugs and worms that would, if they got the chance, spoil the vegetables in the garden.

All summer the wrens stayed in the house Daddy Blake had built for them, until it was time to fly away to the warm South.

"Where are you going to take us to-day, Daddy?" asked Hal one morning, as he and Mab saw Mr. Blake come out on the front porch where they were playing.

"Oh, we'll go for a walk and look for more birds," he said.

"That will be nice!" exclaimed Mab. "Maybe I'll find my Dickie bird, now."

"Will you take the cage along?" asked Hal.

"I think not," Mr. Blake said. "It is too much to carry on a long walk, and I am afraid, after all, we would not find Dickie."

"Well, we'll have fun, just going walking with you, Daddy," said Hal, "won't we, Mab?"

“Yes, Hal.”

And, hand in hand, the children went along to the woods with Daddy Blake.

They saw many birds, and Mr. Blake took some pictures of them and their nests, with his camera. They walked on through the woods, and, after a while, came to a farm yard.

In the yard were a number of chickens, and some mother hens with little baby chickens following them around. All at once one of the hens made a queer sound in her throat. And, as she did so the other chickens did the same thing.

Then a big rooster gave a loud crowing call, and flapped his wings. Hal and Mab saw the little chickens run under the wings of the mother hen, while some half-grown chickens scurried under the bushes.

“Why, the chickens are frightened,” cried Hal, in surprise.

“What makes them?” asked Mab.

“I think they must have seen a hawk up in the air, ready to pounce down on some of them,” answered Mr. Blake. “Yes,

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there he is," and the children's father pointed to a big bird flapping his wings up in the air over the hen yard.

All at once the bird seemed to fold up its wings, and then, straight and swift, it shot downward.

"The hawk is going to try to get a chicken!" cried Mr. Blake. "Watch him!"

Faster and faster down swooped the hawk.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HANGING NEST

WITH a harsh cry the hawk tried to strike with his sharp claws a half grown chicken, that had not known enough to hide under a bush, or else it had come out, thinking the hawk had gone. Right down on top of the chicken pounced the hawk, but before it could flap its wings and rise in the air again with the prize, the biggest rooster in the yard came running toward the hawk.

With a loud "Cock-a-doodle-do!" the rooster sprang at the hawk with his feet, on which were sharp spurs, like thorns on a bramble briar bush.

"Oh, the rooster is going to fight the hawk!" cried Hal. "Look!"

"Yes, that's what he is going to do," said Mr. Blake. "He wants to drive the hawk away, and save the chicken."

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And that is what the rooster did. Striking at the hawk with his feet and wings, picking at him with his bill, the rooster so beat and frightened the hawk that it let go of the chicken.

Then with a great flapping of its wings up rose the hawk in the air again, just as the farmer came running out with a gun.

"Bang!" went the gun, as the man fired at the hawk.

"Oh, he shot him! He shot the hawk!" cried Hal.

"No, I only just touched him—made a few feathers fly," said the farmer. "I wish I had *hit* him, for that hawk, or one like it, has taken a lot of my chickens of late."

"The rooster drove him off this time," Daddy Blake said. "He is a brave rooster."

"Yes, and that isn't the first fight he's had with a hawk."

"Do all hawks take chickens?" asked Mab, as she and her brother looked at the flying bird which was now only a speck in

the sky. He must have made up his mind to get his chicken dinner somewhere else.

"No, not all hawks steal chickens," said Daddy Blake, "but all hawks like to eat meat, and if they can't catch rats, mice or frogs they might take a chicken, though the one we just saw, which is called Cooper's hawk as well as a chicken hawk, and the big blue-darter, is the sort of a bird that lives almost entirely on chickens or ducks, and on birds of the woods and fields.

"This Cooper's hawk nearly always gets something to eat as we saw it try just now. It swoops down out of the air, and tries to stick its sharp claws, or talons, in the back of a chicken, or some bird. Then it carries it away, or it may kill it and partly pull it apart on the spot, if it is too big a prize with which to fly away. Farmers do not like these hawks, and shoot them as often as they can, for these hawks do much harm."

"I don't know of any hawks that do good," said the farmer, who had asked Mr. Blake and the children to come and sit

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"And maybe we could catch a goldfish," laughed Mab.

"I don't believe there are any goldfish in this brook," said Mr. Blake, "but there is a chap who is going to do some fishing, and he has neither a pole, line or hook; nor does he need bait."

"Then he can't catch any fish!" said Hal, who thought he knew, because once his father had taken him and Mab fishing, as I have told you in a book before this one.

"Where is the fisherman, Daddy?" asked Mab, looking about.

"He isn't exactly a fisher-*man*," said the children's father. "But there he sits, on the limb of that tree, waiting for a bite. He is a kingfisher."

"Where? I don't see any one, Daddy!" cried Hal. "Does he fish for kings—like the king who was in the parlor, eating bread and honey?"

"No, he isn't that kind, either," Mr. Blake answered. "There he sits on the limb of that tree," and he pointed through the woods to where a bird, about a foot

long, was perched on a dead branch. The bird's feathers were a sort of grayish blue, and he had a band of blue feathers across his chest, like a sash. On his head he wore a crest of feathers, just as some ladies do in their hats, and this bird's bill was long and sharp—longer and sharper even than a woodpecker's.

"He has sharp claws, too," said Daddy Blake, "as he needs them to hold the fish he catches."

"And does a bird really catch fish?" asked Hal.

"Oh, yes. Don't you remember the fish-hawks down at the seashore? Well, this bird does the same thing, only he doesn't go down to the ocean. Watch him now!"

As Hal and Mab looked, they saw the big bird suddenly dart down off the tree limb. Straight for the water he went, and partly under it, for a kingfisher has oily feathers, like a duck's and he does not mind getting wet.

Into the water this bird splashed, and when he came out he had a fish in his bill.

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"Oh, the fish is alive!" cried Hal. "See it wiggle, Daddy!"

"Yes, a kingfisher only catches live fish," said Mr. Blake. "Now watch him eat it."

The fish was trying to get out of the bird's claws, but the kingfisher held it too tightly, though the bird had to take his catch to a near-by, flat rock, where he quickly quieted the fish by striking it with the strong bill.

"Why, I never would have thought a bird could catch a fish," said Mab. "Oh, and now see him eat it!"

The kingfisher had taken hold of the fish, head first in his bill, and now he was beginning to swallow it. Wiggling and twisting himself about, to make his dinner go down, the kingfisher slowly swallowed the fish. He did not wait for it to be cooked, or anything like that.

"Why, the fish is almost as big as the bird!" cried Hal. "He can never swallow it!"

"Yes, I think he can," said Daddy.

Blake. "Those birds' stomachs seem to stretch, and get larger, so they can take in a very big fish. I once saw one who had eaten such a large fish that he had to leave part of the tail sticking out for a time."

"Where is a kingfisher's nest?" asked Hal.

"They are very hard to find," his father told him. "Nearly always the nest is just a hole in a sandy, or clay, bank. The papa and mamma birds make a tunnel about six feet long in the bank.

"At the far end of this hole the mother bird lays her eggs on a bundle of grass, and, after a while, the little birdies come out."

"How many?" Hal wanted to know.

"Oh, sometimes only four, and again as many as eight. When the little kingfishers are hatched they do not look at all like their father or mother, for they have no feathers on at all. But after a while the feathers come out, even the bristly top-knot, which looks so queer in the big birds."

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By this time the kingfisher had finished his dinner. Away he went. But another one came along, and, perching on the same dead limb, soon took a dive down in the brook and came up with a small fish, with which he flew away.

“Where is he taking it?” asked Hal.

“Oh, probably home to his wife or little ones. While the baby birds are small their fathers or mothers bring fish for them to eat. When the large birds get near the nest with a fish they give a loud call, and the little birds hurry to the front door, or the hole in the bank, to get the fish. Only one bird at a time can be fed, for they all eat their fish whole, just as the big birds do. And when one has been given his fish the others all run backward through their dirt tunnel to the end, and there they all cuddle up together to keep warm, and wait for the next call to dinner.”

“I’m tired of walking now,” said Hal, when they had gone on from the brook a little way. “Oh, here’s a funny seat. I’m going to sit down in it.” And he pointed

to where two trees grew close together in the shape of a letter V. "I can sit down right between them," Hal said, and he did.

Mab and her father walked on a little farther, looking for some yellow violets that grew in the wood, and when they found them the little girl gathered a handful.

"Well, shall we walk on a little farther?" asked Mr. Blake, after a while. "Are you rested, Hal?"

"Yes, Daddy. I'm not so tired, now."

"All right. Come on."

But Hal did not get up. Mab could see that he was trying to, but he still stayed there, sitting in the V shaped tree.

"Come on, Hal! Come on!" she cried. "Why don't you come?"

"I—I can't!" answered the little boy, in a queer voice.

"Why?" his father wanted to know.

"Because I'm stuck fast. I sat down between these trees so hard that I'm caught, just like Roly-Poly was caught in the

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sticky fly paper one day. Come and help me, Daddy!" called Hal.

Mr. Blake laughed, and so did Mab. Hal, though, only smiled, for he was not quite sure that he could get out. But he was not hurt, only it felt queer, he said afterward, to be squeezed between two trees.

"I'll get you loose," said Mr. Blake, running over to Hal. Then Daddy pressed the two trees apart with his strong arms. This made the place where Hal was sitting a bit wider, so he could get up.

"I'll never sit in a place like that again," spoke Hal, as he brushed some bits of tree-bark off his knickerbockers. "If you hadn't been with me, Daddy, I might have had to stay here all night."

"Oh, I would have come and found you," said Mr. Blake, laughing.

On and on they went through the woods, and soon they had come out on a road that led to their home. As they passed under a big elm tree, Hal looked up.

"Oh, what's that?" he asked his father,

pointing. "It looks just like a little bag, or hammock, hanging there."

"It is a sort of hammock," said Daddy Blake. "That is a hanging nest."

"A hanging nest!" exclaimed Mab. "How nice it must be for the baby birds to sleep in a cradle like that."

"It is nice, when they don't fall out, for then it is very hard for them to get back in again," said Mr. Blake.

"What kind of a bird's nest is it?" asked Hal.

"That of a Baltimore oriole," was the answer.

"Oh, I wish I could see one!" cried Mab.

"I'll try to rouse one up," spoke Mr. Blake, and he began to whistle a loud, clear and sharp note.

CHAPTER IX

A BAD BIRD

"WHAT are you doing that for, Daddy?" asked Hal. "Are you whistling for a dog to scare the birds?"

"I am whistling to call the birds," answered Mr. Blake. "Please don't ask me questions for a little while, Hal, as I can't talk and whistle at the same time," and Daddy laughed.

Then Mr. Blake went on with his whistling, and Hal began making funny noises in his mouth.

"What are you trying to do, Hal?" asked Mab.

"I was trying to do what Daddy said he couldn't do—talk and whistle at the same time," said her brother. "But Daddy was right—I can't do it."

"Of course not!" laughed Mab. "You can't do that any more than you can be asleep and awake at the same time."

"Well, Roly-Poly sometimes sleeps with one eye open and the other eye shut," Hal said, "and maybe some day I can whistle and talk at the same time."

All this while Mr. Blake was whistling away, clearly and sharply, and pretty soon, up in the tree near the nest, there came an answer.

"Here is our oriole, children!" cried Daddy Blake. "See him up in the tree," and he pointed to a bird with orange and black colored feathers perched near the hanging nest. The oriole looked down and whistled several times.

"I guess he thought I was a bird friend of his," said Mr. Blake. "Orioles will often come if you whistle the same as they do, just as a dog will sometimes bark if he hears you give a make-believe bark at him."

"I wish he'd go down in the nest," Mab said, and, just as if the bird heard what

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she said, down he flew into the hanging cradle.

"The mother oriole is the best builder of nests of any bird I know," said Mr. Blake. "From bits of cloth, string, thread, grass and small roots of trees she weaves a regular bag which she fastens on the end of a swaying limb. Sometimes the nest will be seven inches deep, so you see it makes a very good bed, or cradle, for the little birds."

"Don't they ever fall out?" asked Hal.

"Oh, yes, sometimes, when they are getting ready to learn to fly. When they do topple out of their nest the mother and father bird cannot lift them back into it again, as your mother, or I, could lift you back in your crib if you fell out on the floor," said Daddy Blake.

"What do they do?" asked Mab.

"Well, the old birds flutter about the little fellow on the ground and make a great fuss to drive away any cats that may be about. And then, usually, after a while, the little bird manages to get over close to

the trunk of the tree. With his sharp claws he can cling to the rough bark, and then he may get back in the nest. But it is hard work. Orioles are quite tame, and they like to live near houses. The little girl-birds begin, when quite small, to practice weaving their nests with bits of string and cloth."

"There he is again!" cried Mab, as the oriole flew out of the nest. "Where is he going, Daddy, off down South?"

"Oh, no. He won't fly for the South until cold weather sets in up here. And when he does fly he will go all the way to Central America, where he spends his Winters."

"That is a long way off; isn't it?" asked Hal.

"Very far, yes. But birds can fly a long distance, though I suppose they stop to rest at night."

Mr. Blake whistled again, and once more the oriole answered him, coming back to flit among the tree branches as though looking for Daddy, the queer bird

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who could talk bird language, yet whom the oriole could not see.

"I mustn't plague him any more," said Mr. Blake. "Come now, children, we'll be getting home, as it is almost supper time."

"I wish my Dickie would come home to *his* supper," said Mab, with a little sigh, but when, after she reached home, she looked in the cage, her nice canary was not there.

It was a day or so after this that, when Hal and Mab were playing with Roly-Poly on the porch, Aunt Lolly came out with some cookies she had baked.

"Here, Hal and Mab," she said. "You will like these. They are made with raisins the way you always want them."

"Good!" cried Hal.

"Thank you," said Mab and then Hal said "Thank you," also. He was so anxious to get the cookie that he forgot this part, at first.

"Are you ready for another walk to look for new birds?" asked Mr. Blake, as he

came home early from the office that afternoon.

"Oh, we just love it!" cried Hal. "Thank you for taking us, Daddy!" You see he did not forget this time.

As Daddy Blake, with the children, started down the street their uncle called to them:

"Wait a minute and I'll give you two pennies!"

"All right, Uncle Pennywait!" laughed Mab. "We'll wait."

So they waited, got their pennies to spend for lollypops, and then they went on with their father.

"Oh, see!" suddenly cried Mab, pointing to a bush. "It looks just like a bit of fire in there, Daddy."

"Fire? Where?" asked Mr. Blake, and when Mab pointed and Hal, too, saw a dash of something very red, Daddy said:

"That isn't fire, Mab. It was the flash of a bird's scarlet wings."

"Oh, what a lovely red it was!" cried

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the little girl. "It looked just like an Easter egg. It is really a bird?"

"Yes, there he is," and Daddy Blake pointed to where a bird, with black wings and tail, but with the rest of his feathers a brilliant red, was perched on a branch.

"That is a scarlet tanager," went on Daddy Blake. "I have not seen one in a numbers of years, though there used to be a great many of them here."

"What happened to them?" asked Hal.

"Oh, men and boys killed them, sometimes to get the feathers to put on the hats of ladies."

"Oh, to kill such a pretty bird as that!" cried Mab, as the scarlet tanager flitted about in the bush near them. "I'm never going to wear birds' feathers on my hat when I grow up."

"I wouldn't either," spoke her father. "Pretty ribbon, or velvet, is just as nice and no birds have to be killed to get those trimmings. This bird lives down in the tropics, where it is very hot, and he and his mates only come up here in Winter.

So it seems a shame to shoot him when he does come. But that is what happened and that's why there are so few scarlet tanagers now.

"The tanagers are of many kinds, but only two or three come up here to visit us. They can stand very little cold, and often when they are on a visit here, and it gets chilly in May, many of the tanagers die. Then many others are killed as they fly against the glass lanterns of the lighthouses along the coast. But if you were to see this same tanager a little later in the season, when his wife has hatched out the little birds, he would look much different than he does now," said Daddy Blake.

"Why?" Hal wanted to know.

"Because his red feathers all drop out, and in their place come olive green ones, until when Winter is here he has olive and black feathers, instead of scarlet and black. Then, in the spring again, when he and his mate wish to raise another family, his red feathers grow out again."

"Oh, I know!" cried Mab. "He grows

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his red feathers again when he wants to look pretty to his wife."

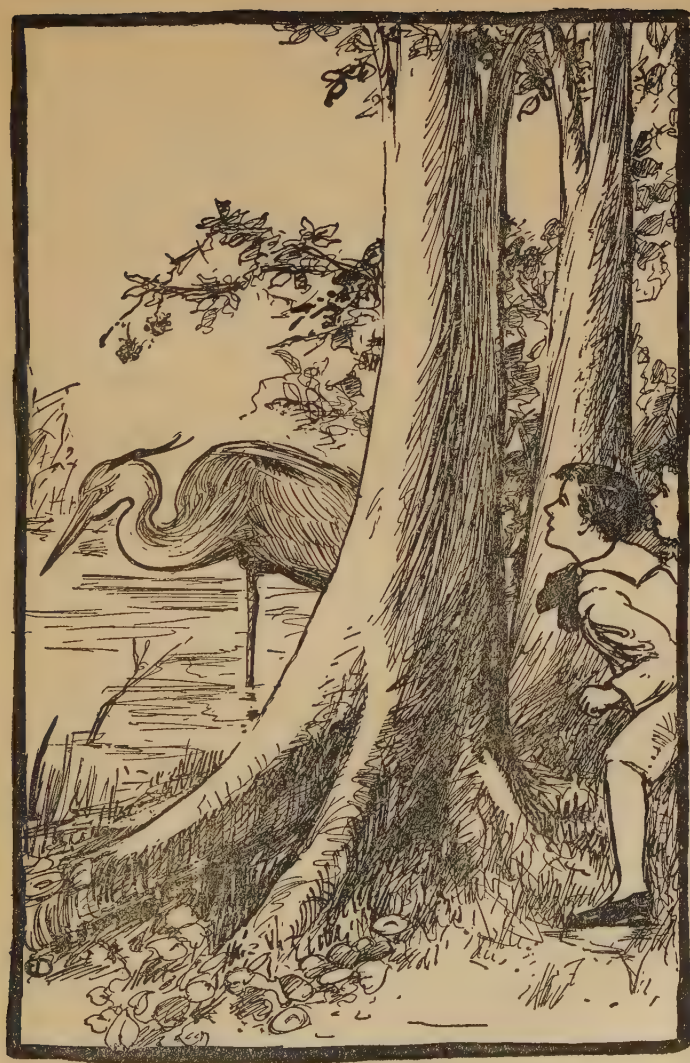
"I guess that's it," said Mr. Blake. "Nearly all the papa-birds have brighter feathers than the mamma-birds. The tanager lives on bugs and insects which he catches in the tops of tall trees, but he builds his nest in a low bush, sometimes not higher than your head from the ground. Birds do queer things, and we cannot always know why."

The scarlet tanager fluttered about, now and then giving a sort of whistling song, a little like the orioles' notes.

"If I had him in a cage with my nice yellow bird it would make a pretty picture," said Mab.

"But I'm afraid the tanager would not like it in a cage," Mr. Blake said. "Canaries do not seem to mind it so much, but other birds do."

Daddy Blake and the children walked on a little farther, and pretty soon they came to a bush, in which Mab spied a bird's nest.



"Oh, what a funny nest!" she cried. "It has three stories, like a little house! Look, Daddy!"

Daddy Blake looked. Then he reached in and, lifting out of the nest an egg, he dropped it on the ground, where it broke. "Oh, Daddy! You spilled the egg!" cried Mab.

"Yes, I wanted to," her father said. "That was the egg of a bad bird, and if it hatched out it would kill some good birds."

"What kind of a bird's egg was it?" asked Hal.

"That was the egg of a cowbird, Hal."

"Oh, would a cow come out of that egg?" asked Mab.

"No, but the bird that might have come out of it would perch on a cow's back to get bugs and insects, and that's why it is called a cowbird. That isn't why it is a bad bird, though, or why I smashed the egg. I'll tell you about that part of it," said Daddy.

CHAPTER X

THE GEESE PICTURES

HAL and Mab looked down at the broken egg. There was no sign of a bird in it, and it seemed only like a small hen's egg, which, sometimes, the cook dropped on the kitchen floor.

"If this egg had hatched," said Daddy Blake, "there would have come out of it a bird a little smaller than the robin, and, if it should have happened to be a boy-birdie he would grow up with shiny, greenish-black feathers on his body and wings, and brown ones on his head. If it was to be a girl-bird the feathers would not be so bright. The mother cowbird, after she and her husband have spent some time in the meadows, picking bugs, ants and other little creatures off the backs of the bossies, looks for a place to lay her eggs. But she

'doesn't do as the other birds do, and make a nest for herself."

"She doesn't?" asked Hal, in surprise. "Does she lay the eggs on the roof of a house the way the night-hawk does?"

"No, she doesn't do that. But the mother cowbird looks around through the woods until she finds where another bird has made a nest for her eggs, and what does the cowbird do but put in one of her own eggs."

"And then does she set on it, and hatch it?" Mab wanted to know.

"Indeed she does not!" cried Daddy Blake. "The cowbird is too lazy to make her own nest, and she is also too lazy to hatch her own eggs. She wants the other bird to do it."

"And do they?" Hal asked.

"Sometimes they do, not knowing any better, and often when the cowbird is hatched it is so big that it smothers the other little birds in the nest, or makes them starve by eating all the food the mother bird brings. That's why cowbirds are so

bad—they cause the death of so many other birds which, if they had lived, would have eaten many bugs and worms that might spoil the farmer's crops."

"But doesn't the other bird know when the cowbird has laid an egg in her nest?" asked Mab, as she looked at the queer, three-storied nest she had seen in the bushes.

"Not always do other birds know the difference between their own eggs and those of the cowbird, though the difference to us is plain to be seen," went on Daddy Blake. "But the bird which built this nest often throws out the cowbird's egg, so that it cracks. Or else it builds another bottom to the nest, covering up the cowbird's egg, and sometimes its own eggs, and starts in all over again.

"The bird that does this is called the yellow warbler, and is the same kind you thought was your yellow Dickie bird," said Mab's father.

"Does a yellow warbler live in this nest?" asked Hal.

"Yes, and it is probably hiding in the bushes now, watching us," went on Mr. Blake. "We will go away soon, so it may come back to the nest, and set on the eggs. But I want to show you how this yellow warbler has put three new bottoms in its nest, building it up higher each time, to stop the bad cowbird's egg from hatching."

"Then three cowbirds must have laid eggs here," spoke Mab.

"Yes, they did. Maybe almost as soon as the mother yellow warbler had finished making her nest, a cowbird, which was watching her chance, flew in and laid an egg, right in with the warbler's eggs. The mother warbler saw this, and not being able to throw out the cowbird's egg, she covered it over with another bottom. She did this three times, as you can see by the different parts of the nest, like a three-story house, as Mab called it."

"The yellow warbler is a hard worker," said Hal.

"She is," answered his father. "And

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that is why a cowbird picks out, more often than any other nest, the one built by a warbler. The mother cowbird knows the warbler will work hard to feed the baby cowbird, which will eat so much that the baby warblers will starve.

“But you see this warbler was smart, and would have nothing to do with the cowbird’s egg. So I thought I would help her, and throw this last egg out myself, so the warbler would not have to build a fourth bottom to her nest to cover up the bad bird’s egg.”

“I’d like to see a cowbird—just to know how they look,” said Hal.

“Well, let’s go down to the meadow and maybe we can find one,” said Daddy Blake.

Down to the meadow went Mr. Blake and the children. And there, perched on the back of a cow was one of the birds that are too lazy to build their own nests and hatch out their own babies. The bird was pecking around here and there on the

cow's hide, finding little flies and other insects.

"That is about all the good a cowbird does," said Mr. Blake, "eating the bugs that would otherwise bite the cow."

"I guess a cow is about the only one that likes a cowbird then," said Mab.

"I think so," Daddy Blake answered, with a laugh. "Though I suppose all cowbirds like one another, the same as all lazy people are fond of one another."

"I'm never going to be lazy," said Hal.

"Nor I," added his sister.

"Our dog, Roly-Poly, isn't lazy, either," Hal went on. "You ought to see him chase his tail!"

"Yes, Roly is a busy little dog," laughed Mr. Blake.

"I wish he would be busy enough to find Dickie for me," spoke Mab. "Wouldn't it be nice if Roly was a bird dog, and would find my canary for me?"

"It would be nice—too nice to be true, I'm afraid," spoke Daddy Blake, smiling.

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"We might get a cat and train her to hunt for Dickie," Hal said.

"Oh, a cat would eat a bird, and I wouldn't want my Dickie to be eaten," remarked Mab. "I'd rather he would fly away, and never come back, than to have him eaten by a cat."

"Yes, so would I," added Hal.

The children, and Daddy Blake, walked away from the meadow where the cowbirds were fluttering about. Hal saw, a little way ahead of him, a bright red butterfly, fluttering over some flowers.

"Oh, Mab!" cried the little boy. "Let's go see the butterfly eat honey from the flowers!"

Hal started to run toward the brightly-winged insect, but his father caught him by the arm.

"Not so fast, little man!" exclaimed Daddy Blake.

"Why don't you want me to go see the butterfly?" asked Hal. "Will it bite me?"

"Oh, no," answered Daddy Blake, "but

near where the butterfly is fluttering is wet and swampy ground, and I don't want you to get stuck in the mud, as you were stuck in the tree the other day."

"Mud; eh?" said Hal. "I guess I don't want to run in it, either."

"But we will go as close as we can," went on Daddy Blake, "and then walk up a little way where the trees make deeper shadows. For I think in there we may find a new kind of bird."

"What kind?" asked Mab, for she was writing down in a little book the names of the different birds, about which Daddy Blake had told her and Hal. "What kind of a bird, Daddy?"

"Well, you look and see if you can see any bird you haven't seen before," said the father. "You must learn to use your eyes in hunting for birds, just as you did in hunting for flowers."

So Hal and Mab, with their bright eyes, looked up along the little stream, or brook, that flowed into the swamp, where the big

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trees made cool shadows. And Mab saw it first.

“ Oh, it's a big, blue bird! ” cried the little girl, “ and it only has one leg, Daddy! ”

“ I see him, too! Where is his other leg? ” asked the little boy.

He and Sister Mab, with Daddy Blake, were looking at a bird which was about four feet high, standing motionless in the water, down into which he was looking, his long bill pointed toward it.

And suddenly, as the children watched, they saw the bird make a quick stroke with his bill—so quick it was that it seemed he scarcely moved. But then, all at once, Hal and Mab saw a fish in the bird's beak—a fish with shiny, silver sides.

Up into the air the bird tossed the fish, catching it head first as it came down, and then—why, the fish just seemed to slip down the long slender neck of the bird, which was standing on two legs, now.

“ Oh, now it has two feet! ” cried Mab, greatly excited. “ Did the fish have the

bird's other leg, Daddy, and did the bird make the fish give it back?"

"No, the bird had two legs all the while," answered Mr. Blake. "It just stood on one for a while, and drew the other up under its feathers to dry and warm it, perhaps. But the fish did not have it, and the fish is now part of the bird's dinner—down inside it."

"I know what kind of a bird it is," said Hal. "It eats fish, so it must be a fish-hawk, or a kingfisher."

"No, neither one," Daddy Blake answered. "You can see it doesn't look at all like a kingfisher, for it is much larger. This bird is the great blue heron, and I have not seen one around here for years. Many of them have been shot, I am sorry to say, and for no use at all, as they are not good to eat. But we are lucky to have seen this heron. And still more lucky to watch him eat a fish, which he always swallows head first, as does a kingfisher."

"Why do they do that?" asked Mab.

"So the stickery, bony fins will fold

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backward, and not stick in the bird's long neck. He has a very long neck, you see, almost as long as his legs," said Daddy.

"What makes him have such long legs?" asked Hal.

"Because," answered his father, "this bird, like others of the heron family, has to wade out in water to look for the fishes and frogs on which it mostly lives, though it will also eat insects.

"The heron will stand for hours, with never a motion, watching down in the water for a fish, or a frog, to swim near enough to be caught in the long bill. And then there happens what you just saw."

"Oh, look!" cried Hal. "He's caught another fish!"

And so the heron had. Stabbing its bill down in the water, it brought up another fish, which it swallowed whole and head first. Daddy Blake had his camera with him, and snapped a picture of the heron, whose feathers were a bluish gray in color.

"It is not often a heron stands out in

plain view as this one does," said Mr. Blake. "They like to hide away, or to stand in a shadowy, leafy place where there is some sort of color so nearly like that of themselves that your eye can scarcely see them."

"There! He's gone!" suddenly cried Mab. "I can't see him any more."

"Neither can I," said Hal.

"But he is still there," spoke Daddy Blake. "He has just moved back a little, in front of that tangle of bushes. That is his way of hiding himself, though he is as ready as ever to get something to eat. Look, now he has something else."

The children saw a splash in the water. The heron had again stabbed his long bill into it, and this time he brought up, not a fish, but a wiggling snake.

"Oh, do herons eat snakes?" asked Mab, in surprise.

"Indeed they do, and are very glad to get them. They like frogs, too," said Daddy Blake. "There, now he has really flown away," and the children saw the

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beautiful big bird, his long legs trailing out behind him, fly over the trees.

"I guess he had enough dinner," said Hal.

"Yes," answered Daddy Blake. "But no matter how much dinner the heron eats his thin legs will never be any fatter. They are not like your legs, Mab," and he looked at his little girl's chubby ones. "Fat legs for children, thin ones for birds," he said.

"Why is that?" asked Mab.

"Because thin legs are not heavy, and a bird could not fly if it was too heavy. The ostrich has very big, thick and strong legs, and it cannot fly, though it has wings. But the wings help it to run swiftly. An ostrich can run nearly as fast as a horse, and kick almost as hard."

"Are there any ostriches around here, Daddy?" asked Hal, as he looked at the great blue heron, which was now a mere speck in the sky.

"No, son. They have to live where the winters are warm, and that is in Africa,

though some ostriches are raised in the warm parts of California.

"But come now, it is time we were getting home, for mother will be anxious about us. And I want to get ready to take some new kind of pictures."

"What kind?" Hal wanted to know.

"Geese pictures," answered his father.

"There are lots of geese over in Mr. Watson's yard," said Mab. "They hissed at me once."

"I don't want that kind of pictures," said Mr. Blake. "I want pictures of wild, Canadian geese. And to get them I shall have to build a little house in which we can hide with the camera, for the Canadian geese are very wild. They are late in flying up North this year, but they ought to be along soon, now."

The next day, when Hal and Mab went out in the barn where they heard Daddy Blake pounding and sawing, they saw him at work on a big box that their new piano had come in.

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“ Oh, is that for us to play in?” asked Hal, eagerly.

“ Not right away, though you may have it for a play-house later. But now I am going to make something in which we can hide ourselves and, I hope, get some photograph pictures of the Canadian geese,” Daddy said.

“ Oh, what fun that will be!” cried Mab, clapping her hands.

CHAPTER XI

THE BUTCHER-BIRD

DADDY BLAKE let the children peep inside the piano box. He had cut out some little places that looked like windows, and inside the box were shelves.

"What are you going to put on the shelves?" asked Mab. "Is that the place for dishes?"

"Well, you can use the shelves for that when you and Hal play house," answered her father. "But first we are going to use them for seats."

"What are we going to sit in it for?" Hal wanted to know.

"Because we cannot tell when the Canadian geese will come honking along to alight, I hope, near our pond to feed. If we stayed out in the open they would see

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us, and not come near, and I want them to come close so I can get pictures of them. And as it would be no fun standing up, or kneeling, inside the piano box for an hour, or maybe even two, I nailed these little shelves on the sides of the box so we can sit on them and rest our legs."

"And what are the little windows for?" asked Mab. "Or if the shelves are not shelves, but seats, maybe the holes aren't windows," she added.

"Yes, they are windows for me to look out, and to put the eye of my camera out of, so it can see to take pictures of the geese," spoke Daddy Blake. "We shall all be inside the box, with the camera, looking out, and ready to take the pictures of the geese as soon as they come close enough."

Daddy Blake hammered away, and sawed at the piano box, until he had made it just the way he wanted it. Then he had some men put it on a wagon, and take it off to the shores of a pond not far from the Blake home.

"For several years now," said Daddy, "the Canadian geese, on their way up North from down South, have stopped for a few days near this pond. I hope they will do it this year."

"What do they stop for?" asked Hal.

"To feed and rest. You see the wild Canadian goose, which is about as large as the tame kind of geese around here, is a wise bird. When it is Winter here he flies down South, where it is warm, and where he can find the celery and other green food he likes to eat. But when he knows it is getting warm up here he starts on his journey, of something over two thousand miles, and flies over into the country of Canada. He stops to rest at several places on the way and this pond is one of them, for though the Canadian goose spends more time on land than some kinds, yet it also loves the water. So I hope some will come to our pond."

The men set Daddy Blake's piano box down near the shore of the pond. Then they helped him cover it with branches,

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vines and leaves of trees, so that it looked like a brush-heap.

“Why do you do that?” asked Hal.

“So the geese will not be afraid. They would not like the looks of the white piano box, but they do not mind the sight of bushes and branches, with which it is covered.”

“And are we going to hide in there with you?” asked Mab.

“Yes, if you want to see me take some geese pictures.”

“When will the geese come?” asked Hal.

“That is hard to say. But you will easily know them when you see them. For if they fly by day, as they sometimes do, though more often at night, you will see two long strings of big birds, high in the air. Generally they fly in the shape of a big letter V with an old gander in the lead, going: ‘Honk! Honk! Honk!’ like some automobile horn. You will never be mistaken in wild geese once you have seen, or heard, them. But now let us find out how

it seems to go in our little photograph-house."

There was just about room for Daddy Blake and the two children in the piano box, and not much more. They sat on the little shelf-like seats, and looked out of the holes that had been cut for the camera. Through the tangle of vines in front, the children could see the pond not far away.

"I wish the geese would come now," said Mab.

"I don't," spoke her father with a laugh. "I have not my camera with me."

When the children went home, leaving the vine-covered box on the shore of the pond, they looked up in the air for a sight of the V shaped flock of Canadian geese, and they listened for the "Honk! Honk!" but they did not see, nor hear, what they wished.

Two days later, though, after Daddy Blake had taken the children on other bird hunts, when they found the nest of an owl in a hollow tree, they met a man who said:

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"I heard the wild geese honking over my house last night, Mr. Blake."

"Did you, indeed? Then they must have begun to fly North. Now, children, we must go hide in the box, and wait until we see some geese near enough to photograph," said Daddy Blake.

Taking his camera with him next day, Mr. Blake, with Hal and Mab, went to the pond. Mr. Blake had scattered some yellow chicken corn near the edge of the water, right in front of the box, which was still hidden in the pile of brush. So well was it hidden that Hal and Mab had to look twice before they could tell where it was.

"I don't believe the geese will see it, either," said the little girl.

"Well, I hope they don't," spoke her father, "but then they have much sharper eyes than have we. But now we will go in and wait."

There was a door cut in the back of the box, away from the side nearest the pond, and through this door in went Daddy

Blake and the children. Mr. Blake had his camera with him, and he had brought some chocolate for the children to eat as he thought they might get hungry while waiting for the geese to come honking along.

"And when you get tired I'll take you home, and come back and wait until I get a picture," said the father.

"Oh, we won't get tired!" Mab said.

But it was not as easy to sit quietly in the box as it was to tramp over the fields, and through the woods and, after about half an hour, Hal and Mab began to fidget about. They kept very still, though, for Daddy had told them they must only whisper, as wild or Canadian, geese have very good ears, and are easily frightened.

"Well, we'll go pretty soon now, if we don't get a picture," whispered Daddy Blake. "Then I'll come back alone."

But just then, far off in the air, sounded:

"Honk! Honk! Honk!"

"There they are!" cried Mab, out loud, and then she clapped her hand over her

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mouth and whispered: "Oh, I forgot! I didn't mean to do that."

"It's all right," spoke her father, kindly. "No harm is done. The geese are too far off for them to have heard. But they really are coming, and we must get ready for them. I hope they alight at this pond."

He opened the back door of the little piano house, and pointed up to the sky. There, just as he had told them, Hal and Mab saw two lines of birds in the shape of a V, the point coming toward them. This point was one goose, the leader of the flock.

"They are headed this way!" said Daddy Blake. "I'll get my camera ready. And now you must keep very still, children, if I am to get a picture."

He closed the door of the box, or "blind", as hunters and photographers call it, and pointed his camera out of one of the window holes. The "honking" came nearer and nearer, and then there was a sudden splashing in the waters of the pond as the geese settled down in it.

“Good!” whispered Daddy Blake. “They have seen my corn, and are going to eat some. Now keep very still.”

Hal and Mab scarcely stirred, though their small legs and arms ached. But they wanted to see Daddy Blake take the pictures. Looking out of the little holes they could see about twenty-five wild Canadian geese on the pond. Some were putting their heads under to get the weeds growing on the bottom, and others were picking up the corn that lay in the water, near shore. The wild geese made a beautiful picture.

“Click!” went Daddy Blake’s camera, and he had one photograph. Then he got ready to take more. By this time the geese were on shore in front of the “blind” and were walking up to it, eating corn as they went. What splendid, big fellows those geese were! How strong and swift they looked—something like barnyard geese, but wilder.

“Click!” went the camera again, and Daddy Blake took more pictures. Hal

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and Mab never moved. Near them were tiny holes from which they could peep.

Suddenly there was a noise at one end of the pond. Perhaps a fish jumped out of the water. At any rate the geese were frightened. With loud "honks" they flapped their wings, and rose in the air.

"They are going away!" cried Daddy Blake. "We need keep quiet no longer. But I want to get a picture of them on the wing, as they fly."

He quickly opened the door of the "blind" and took some more snapshots of the geese as they formed the letter V.

"I have some fine pictures!" Daddy Blake said. "It was worth all the trouble it took to make the piano box into a blind."

"And now may we have it for a play-house?" asked Mab.

Her father told her she and Hal might, and that he would have the men bring it home to the yard for them, as he no longer needed it for getting geese pictures.

On the way home Daddy Blake told the children how the wild geese and ducks laid

their eggs on the ground, in a nest roughly made of sticks and grass. But the mother goose, or duck, lines the nest with soft feathers from her breast so the babies have a nice cradle after all. The nests of wild ducks are not easy to find, as they are in the middle of dense woods or swamps.

"There is one duck, though, that builds its nest in a tree," said Daddy Blake. "This is the wood duck, and very beautifully colored it is. It builds its nest in a hollow tree, like a woodpecker."

"And how do the little ducks gets to the water?" asked Hal. "Do they fly?"

"No, the first time, or two, the mother carries them from the nest to the water in her bill."

"Just like a kitten!" cried Mab.

"Well, something like a kitten, yes," spoke Daddy Blake. "Though mother cats never take their kittens to water that I know of. Puppy dogs might, but not kittens, for cats are not fond of taking a bath, except to wash their faces with their tongues."

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“ My Dickie bird loved his bath,” spoke Mab. “ I wish I had him back,” and tears came in her eyes as she thought of her lost pet.

“ I must get you a new one,” said her father. “ I will get it for your birthday.”

It was on the way home from having made the pictures of the Canadian geese that Hal and Mab saw something queer. On a thorny spike of a bush they saw a little mouse, and at first Hal thought it was alive. But when they came nearer they saw that the little mouse was quite dead.

“ Did it fall on the thorn, and get killed? ” asked Mab.

“ No,” said Daddy Blake. “ It was put there by the butcher-bird.”

“ The butcher-bird! ” cried the children. “ Does it keep a butcher shop? ”

“ No, but it hangs up its food, or meat, on hooks, almost the way the butcher does in his shop,” answered Daddy Blake. “ Let us hide here, and we may soon see the butcher-bird.”



CHAPTER XII

DICKIE COMES BACK

THERE was a thick, leafy bush near the thorny one, on a spike of which the little mouse was stuck, and, sitting down on a log back of the green screen, Daddy Blake and the children waited.

“Are you going to take a picture of the butcher-bird?” asked Hal.

“I will if I can,” his father answered, making ready his camera.

“Why do they call it a butcher-bird, and what does it look like?” Mab wanted to know.

“Because it kills, or butchers, its food, and hangs it up in such a queer way. Sometimes it sticks a mouse, or other bird, on a thorn to kill it, as the butcher-bird, or shrike as it is called, does not have strong enough claws to hold what it catches. Ah,

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I think our butcher is coming now," said Daddy Blake.

There was a whirr of wings, and suddenly there perched on the thorn bush a bird about as big as a robin, with gray feathers on his back, a sort of light blue on his breast and with black and white wings and tail. The bird's head was large, and it had a heavy black line on it. His bill was hooked on the end, like a parrot's only not so much so, and it is with this hook that the butcher-bird tears the meat he eats.

Looking all around him, for a sign of danger, but not seeing Daddy Blake and the children, where they were hidden, the shrike, or butcher-bird, began eating the mouse he had probably hung up there a day or two before.

"Snap!" went Daddy Blake's camera, the eye of which he had poked through the bushes, and though the butcher-bird flew quickly away its picture had been taken.

"The butcher birds are not what you might call *nice* birds," said Daddy Blake, "but still they are very useful when they

do not kill other good birds. They are useful when they catch mice, and also when they catch sparrows, of which we have so many that they drive away better, and more useful, birds. But the shrike is not nice when he kills our song birds, and those that eat insects which do damage in the garden.

“There are two kinds of butcher-birds, the loggerhead and Northern shrike,” went on Daddy Blake. “The loggerhead, which is smaller, comes to us in the Summer. He will perch on some high place, even as high as a church steeple, until down below, near the ground, he sees something he can kill. It may be another bird, or a flying insect. After it he darts as quick as a flash, catching his meal in his bill.

“Sometimes the loggerhead will hide in a bush, and, by making a noise like a sparrow, or other bird, will attract, or call, the other bird to it. When near enough the butcher-bird will pounce on the poor thing and kill it with his bill, or afterward on a thorn. Shrikes often kill grasshoppers,

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too, and when I was a boy, and we had to go to the fields to open up the shocks of corn, for husking, the shrikes would perch on a fence rail and watch for the field-mice to dart out from among the corn-stalks. Then the birds would catch them."

"I don't like the butcher-birds," said Mab.

"Well, they are very useful," her father said. "The Northern one comes to us in Winter, and is quite a large bird, being about nine inches long, with gray feathers, and black and white ones on his wings. As there are no grasshoppers in Winter the Northern shrike must eat other birds, or mice. And often they will kill several at once, one after the other, and put them on thorns where they can eat them as they please. Shrikes have very sharp eyes, and can see a long distance. That is why they perch high, and dart so swiftly after another bird, or mouse."

Leaving the dead mouse stuck on the thorn, where the butcher-bird could come back and get it, Hal and Mab, with Daddy

Blake, went home. They had had a wonderful time hunting birds that day, and had seen several new kinds.

One night, as Mab was getting undressed for bed, she heard what she thought was a voice out in the yard calling:

“Who? Who? Who?”

“Oh, Mother, who is that asking questions?” Mab wanted to know. “Are they asking my name?”

“Oh, no,” answered Daddy Blake, who heard what Mab asked. “That is an owl bird. I would like to get a picture of one but I can’t in the dark.”

“Couldn’t you take a flash-light, same as you did our pictures in the dark once?” asked Hal.

“Well, I might, if I could get the owl to set off the flash and take its own picture, as the catbird did,” said Daddy Blake. “I’ll think about it.”

“Who? Who? Who?” hooted the owl out in the tree near Mab’s window, and it sounded as though he might be saying: “Whose picture are you going to take?”

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Mab and Hal looked out of the window, but it was so dark they could not see the owl, though they could hear the fluttering of his wings through the leaves.

The next day, as Hal and Mab were out in the garden with Daddy Blake, their father suddenly whispered to them:

“Look! There’s an owl!”

“Where?” asked Hal, in a low voice.
“I don’t see it.”

Daddy Blake pointed to what the children at first thought was only a large lump of bark on a tree, but, as they looked more closely, they saw it had eyes, and was really a bird. But its feathers were almost the color of bark, and even the tufts, that looked like ears, seemed also like sharp bits of bark.

“That is a short-eared owl, or meadow owl,” said Mr. Blake, and the bird allowed them to come quite close without flying away. “I can get a picture of that owl, though not of the hoot owl we heard the other night. For he only flies after dark,

while this owl does some of his hunting by day."

"What do owls hunt, Daddy?" asked Hal, when Mr. Blake had taken a picture of the short-eared owl, which soon afterward flew away.

"Mice are what an owl mostly hunts for," said Daddy, "though they will eat beef meat, as some do when they are tame."

"I wouldn't like to have a tame owl," Mab said. "It has such big, round stare-at-you eyes."

"An owl's eyes have to be big so it can see in the dark," spoke Daddy Blake. "And, unlike the eyes of most birds, those of an owl cannot be moved. When he wants to see anywhere but straight in front of him he has to turn his head.

"But owls are very useful and helpful to the farmer, for they hunt mice for him at night, catching them in the dark, as well as moles and other things that do harm in the garden. And, unlike other birds, the owls do not go away when Winter comes.

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They hunt all winter, living down in the warm hollow of some old tree, or perhaps in the top of a barn, and sometimes in church steeples. Owls sleep nearly all day long, and come out at night to hunt. They are a wise-looking bird, and almost as smart as they look."

Through the Spring and Summer Daddy Blake often took the children hunting birds, sometimes getting pictures of the feathered friends, and again just watching them as they flew over the fields, or in the woods.

They heard the partridge, or ruffed grouse beat his drum, by fluttering his wings so quickly to and fro that they looked like a blurr of light. They heard the quail, or "Bob White," whistle his clear note, they watched the backward, Southern flight of the Canadian geese, and found where a pair of owls had taken an old nest in a hollow tree, where they would stay all Winter.

"It will soon be cold weather again," said Mab one day, as she and Hal came

back from having been off hunting birds with Daddy Blake and his camera. "And I wish my Dickie was safely in his cage," and she looked at the empty one of brass wire.

"Perhaps he may come—soon," said her mother with a smile.

"Oh, I hope so," sighed Mab.

"Come, children," said Mr. Blake, about a week after this. "We will go bird hunting for the last time this season. Nearly all the birds that do not intend to stay with us all Winter have gone down South, but we may still find a few."

They did see some, among them the Northern shrike, and they found where he had stuck a dead sparrow on a thorn. Roly-Poly went along this time, as there were now only a few birds for him to scare. The little dog raced here and there, through the bushes and among the dried leaves, for he liked to go with Daddy Blake almost as well as did the children.

Daddy took a picture of some birds while Hal and Mab were resting on a log

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in the woods. It was almost time to go home. Hal got up from the log and walked around to the other end of it.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mab.

"I'm going to jump off and see how far I can go. I'm going to make believe I'm a circus performer," said the little boy.

Hal gave a jump up in the air, but when he came down he gave a funny cry.

"Oh, what is the matter?" asked Mab.

"I—I landed in a mud hole," answered her brother. "I—I'm stuck fast! It's away up over my shoes! Oh, Mab, help me out!"

Hal was indeed stuck in a mud hole. Some water, running from a spring near the mossy log, had made a deep mud hole, over which the dried Autumn leaves had drifted so it could not be seen. And Hal had jumped right there.

Mab ran to help her brother, but she could not get near enough to help pull him out without getting in the mud herself.

"Wait! Wait!" called Mr. Blake, who, having taken the pictures, had come back and had seen what the trouble was. "I'll get you out, Hal."

And he did, though Daddy's feet were wet and muddy too.

"Never mind," he said, "you didn't mean to do it, Hal. But next time you must look where you are going to land before you jump."

"I will," promised Hal. "I thought it was land but it was water."

Daddy Blake hurried home so Hal could change his shoes and stockings. As they entered the back door, having wiped off as much mud as they could, there was heard the sound of a bird singing.

"Hark!" cried Mab, her eyes shining. "That sounds like a canary!"

"It is a canary," Hal said, after listening a second.

"Oh!" cried Mab. "Oh, maybe it's my Dickie come back!"

She ran up into the sitting-room, where the sound of the singing was most plain.

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And there, in the bright yellow cage was a bright yellow bird, singing at the top of his voice.

“Oh, Dickie! Dickie!” cried Mab, standing close to the cage. “You did come back to me; didn’t you, Dickie! Oh, I’m so glad!” and she clapped her hands in delight.

“Yes, it is Dickie,” said Hal, when he had put on clean shoes. “Did he come back in his cage when we were out hunting other birds with Daddy?”

“Well, he is in the cage, isn’t he?” asked Mother Blake, smiling.

“If he isn’t the same Dickie I had before I will love him just the same,” Mab said. “Oh, how sweetly he sings!”

The yellow canary hopped about in his cage singing again and again, trilling and whistling.

Aunt Lolly and Uncle Pennywait came into the room. Hal and Mab were watching and listening to the bird.

“Happy birthday!” said Aunt Lolly.

“Oh, so it is my birthday!” cried Mab.

"I had forgotten all about it. I must go and give Daddy a kiss. I'll give you all kisses!" and she began on her mother.

Then, when she had kissed them all, and Daddy, of course, Mab threw a kiss to Roly-Poly and to the bird singing in his cage.

"Is this the new bird you said you would get for my birthday?" she asked her father.

"Yes, this is your birthday-bird," answered Daddy Blake, "but he is not a new one."

"Is he my own, dear Dickie?" Mab anxiously wanted to know.

"He is, strange as it may seem," said her father. "This is how he came back. The other day Mrs. Ward, who lives down the street, heard a bird singing very sweetly in her garden. She looked out and saw a yellow bird, sitting on a bush near the window. She knew it could not be a yellow warbler, for they have flown down South some time ago.

"It must be some one's canary that got

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away,' said Mrs. Ward. Then she remembered about your bird, Mab, and she put out an empty cage she happened to have. In the cage she put bird seeds and a little dish with water in, for the bird to take a bath."

"And did Dickie fly in her cage, and take a bath?" asked Mab.

"That is what he did, and then Mrs. Ward closed the door, and Dickie was caught. But he seemed glad. He must have known that he would have no place to stay in the woods in Winter and he did not know about flying South, as did the other birds. So you see he found his way nearly back to his own home, and to you."

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried Mab.

"And so am I," said her brother.

Roly-Poly, the little poodle dog, seemed glad also, for he rolled over and over on the floor, and turned somersaults, barking while the canary sang.

"And did Mrs. Ward bring the bird here?" asked Mab.

"She told us about him," said her

mother, "and we asked her to keep him in her house so we could surprise you on your birthday."

"And, oh! it is a lovely surprise!" cried Mab. "I am so happy!"

Dickie sang louder than ever in his own cage, to which he was changed from the one he had flown in at Mrs. Ward's house.

That night Mab was made more happy, for some of her little friends came over, and she and Hal had a party, and Dickie sang louder than ever when the lights were aglow, and the ice cream dishes rattled.

"Oh, we never had so much fun as we did this Summer, when we hunted birds with Daddy," said Mab. "Did we, Hal?"

"No, never!" he answered with a spoonful of ice cream in his mouth. "And we hunted your Dickie, too, Mab."

"Dickie hunted himself," laughed the little girl.

Then the party was ended, and this story is ended too, as you can see for yourself.

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But there are other places for Daddy Blake to take Hal and Mab, and you may read about what else the children did in another book.

THE END

The next volume in this series will be called: "Daddy Takes Us to the Woods."

